

COUSIN SARA





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SARA AT WORK IN ONE OF THE ART GALLERIES OF FLORENCE

Cousin Sara

A STORY OF ARTS AND CRAFTS

BY

ROSA MULHOLLAND

Author of "A Girl's Ideal," "Cynthia's Bonnet Shop"

"The Girls of Banshee Castle," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANCES EWAN

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Chapter I

A Solitary Mite

SARA'S father was a far-off cousin of the Montgomeries of Bleachgreens, in the county of Antrim, known as the Montgomeries of the Mills.

It had been matter of great surprise to Robert Montgomery and his wife when news arrived of the rather late marriage of Colonel Stevenson in India, tidings soon followed by intelligence of the birth of a daughter and the death of the wife.

A few months later a letter from the Colonel from Calcutta informed them that he was sending home the child in care of an ayah, and was making arrangements at Belfast for her reception in the deserted old house of his grandfather.

"I can't imagine an infant inhabiting that big old house in Donegall Place," said Robert Montgomery. "I called there the other day to see how things were going on, and the caretaker put up a chain and peered out at me as if I were a burglar. I think we ought to bring the child here, and throw in her lot with the other youngsters."

"If you do, you will be sorry for it," said Mrs. Montgomery. "We could never hope to please the father in the management of an only child. And as for me, I confess that my own girls and boys are enough for me. I do not feel inclined to undertake an infant."

Robert was a man of hasty, generous impulses, who, because he had a conscience, sometimes suffered from an attack of after-thoughts. In this case his wife, whose conscience did not

lie so near the surface of interior nature, saved him from possible future regrets by her ready representations.

Mr. Montgomery was cross over the matter, not because he felt any deficiency in the numbers of his household, but rather because he suspected his wife, on this occasion, of having commonsense on her side; that indefinable quality, so often inaccurately defined, and of which he believed himself possessed in an unusual degree.

His wife did not wait for any expression in words of the disturbance which she perceived by his looks.

"Have you any idea," she asked, "of Colonel Stevenson's circumstances?"

"He had a fair private fortune," said Robert, "but we know that these military men often spend too much as they go along."

"We have nothing to do with that, however," said the lady emphatically.

They were enlightened on this point by another letter from the Colonel, saying that he wished his child to be comfortably installed in the old home, in care of the traditional nurse of the family, whom he had summoned from the Glens of Antrim to Belfast to receive the infant from the ayah. He had made all arrangements for expense, and stated a sufficiently prosperous condition of his finances.

"He has been very thoughtful about everything," said Robert. "I always found him a capital fellow."

"Perhaps we might as well have offered to take her in," said Mrs. Montgomery.

Her husband smiled, and said with a touch of irony: "You lost your opportunity, Jane."

"Oh, I have no desire to manage other people's money," she declared. "Besides, who knows, she might, ultimately, have been left on our hands."

Mrs. Montgomery took an active interest in the preparations for the coming of the stranger, inspecting the old house in Donegall Place from garret to cellar, seeing to the polishing

up of the furniture, with as much zeal as though Sara were to rule in every part of the house, rather than from her cradle in the nursery, which was freshly papered and painted to receive her. Part of Jane's attention to little Sara's comfort was the providing of a proper trousseau, and the placing of it in the hands of Nurse Canavan, all in order in the big drawers and presses which had held the robes and lace baby-caps of her grandfather's infancy. And, when all was done, a severe caution as to prudence, and a hint of constant supervision were bestowed on the woman who had arrived from the Glens in obedience to the summons from the Colonel.

Nurse Canavan, who had been living on proud memories and a pension from the Stevensons, was delighted with her new position, and not too much charmed by Mrs. Montgomery's promise of assisting her in her charge. Fortunately Bleachgreens was some distance from Belfast, and the lady proved too busy a person to be likely to interfere with her. As soon as the babe was transferred from the arms of the ayah to her cot in the big room where some of her father's ancient toys were waiting her in a cupboard, Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery arrived to pay her a visit, bringing their boys and girls to look at her. All through the visit she slept tranquilly, as if satisfied at having got possession of her home, and wanting nothing further from anyone. The Montgomery boys declared that Sara was a stupid little thing who would not wake up to make acquaintance with them, and a considerable time elapsed before they gave another thought to her.

Mr. Montgomery sometimes called of a morning on his way to his office in the Linenhall buildings, and assured himself that the child was looking healthy, and that Nurse Canavan was devoted to it. And so her first two years passed over Sara's head, set her on her feet, and released the tongue that was to have a good deal to say in her own little world, in her own little time. Before she could speak Nurse Canavan would hold her up to look at her grandfather's portrait over the mantelpiece in the dining-room, triumphant when the child

would stretch her little hands, and crow at the solemn face that gazed down at her, in astonishment or with pleasure, according to the mood of the light that looked through the half-shrouded windows.

A house-maid, peering in at the door, declared that "Mrs. Canavan would make the wain quare in her head, takin' up wi' pictures, an' lettin' no flesh an' blood next or near her!" As soon as the little heels could be heard to tap on the nursery floor and to run on the street pavement, however, Sara began to attract flesh and blood on her own account, would hold out her hands to unknown little boys and girls, and lay hold of elderly strangers by their coats or skirts, obliging them to speak to her.

"You mustn't be too forrard, my darlin'," said Nurse Canavan. "You're your gran'father's child, and who knows what any of these are?"

On which Sara stared at the monitor with her great dark-lashed eyes, and ran to the first shabby-looking old man they met, accosting him with a torrent of gibberish.

Nurse Canavan had decided that Sara was both a noble lady and an heiress, being a Stevenson, and her sleep-song to her babe had something like the burthen of Scott's lovely lullaby:

"O hush thee, my baby, thy sire is a knight,
Thy mother's a lady so lovely and bright,
And all these fair lands, from the hills to the sea,
They all are belonging, dear baby, to thee!"

The lands from the hills to the sea would have been represented to the old woman by a certain Glen of the Waterfall which was as much alive with romance to her imagination as any sea or shore ever sung by any poet. In her secret soul she looked down a little on the Montgomeries, who, though rich and generous, were, after all, only flax-spinners and linen merchants. She did not respond warmly to their invitations, pressing her to take the babe to Bleachgreens for a few days' change of air. The child was too young for any bed but her own cot, or she had a cold, or the mumps, or a threatening of

the measles. Yet Mrs. Canavan gave her nursling plenty of air and exercise as well as food for the hungry thoughts of little-childhood, which flit about and snatch like birds of passage at anything edible that comes in the way of their flight, and swallow and assimilate it with wonderful rapidity.

The street in which Sara's feet first trod the dust was a wide, liberal-minded 'Place' where one or two time-honoured dwellings of distinction stood their ground, yet scarcely despised the handsome shops that had encroached on their neighbourhood, even approving of them as making winter evenings more lightsome and exposing finer works of art and manufacture than could be seen in the lower town. To some these shops were even symbolic or suggestive, as when silks of rich hue and lustre hinted of scenes at Court, or where the well-stocked print-shop stood for a good attempt at a picture-gallery. At the top of the Place, and crowning it, were the building and quadrangle of the old Linenhall, surrounded by its gardens and trees, forming a centre about which the four lines of highly respectable residences known as Donegall Square had ranged themselves.

In the gardens of the Linenhall Sara saw her first bird fly, and heard her first fairy tale. Thenceforward all the ogres' castles had four square walls, and two rows of mysterious windows eyeing the traveller from above mirky bushes, with little zig-zag, forbidden paths between sullen shrubs leading to fearfully unknowable regions. The trees at the side furthest away from civilization and the Place were the out-posts of those terrible woods that harboured the wicked witches who tried to roast the children in their horrid ovens. Those trees also hid the way opening on flowery paths for the feet of that beloved of the gods who shared her cake with the wolf and gave half her bottle of milk to the wild-cat.

Nurse Canavan, looking with the disillusioned eyes of Life's experiences on the smoke-blackened tree-trunks, and scanty grass worn in patches by the running of small feet, never dreamed of the phantasmagoria she was lighting up with tapers

for memory to keep ever burning in the little brain-house so newly built and so all unfurnished.

As they sat on one of the weather-stained seats which were as hostelrys after the long travel of a whole side of the Square gardens Sara's wonder-stricken eyes would gaze speechlessly from the narrator, whose word could not be doubted, to the lanes of distance leading from ugly and obvious commonplace to the far off, sun-and-mist-shrouded realms of the ideal.

She was already three years old when the Montgomery boys and girls opened their arms and their hearts to her.

It came of an accidental meeting in the street when the children from Bleachgreens were on their way to their dancing lesson. At the window of the great print-shop at the lower end of Donegall Place a tiny figure was on tip-toe, pressing a small round nose against the plate-glass window.

"That will be my muvver," said Sara, pointing to an engraving of a noble and beautiful lady.

The Montgomeries, who had also stopped for a look into the picture gallery, stood round the rosy, dark-eyed mite in her little white fur coat and hood, and laughed.

"Oh, it's you, Kitty Canavan!" said Mark, the eldest boy. "You don't mean that this is Cousin Sara!"

After that Sara became an occasional visitor at Bleachgreens, whether Mrs. Canavan would or not.

Chapter II

“I was called for the River”

SARA at eight years old still reigned sovereign of the house in Donegall Place. Like a wandering feather she flitted through the many apartments, but always gravitated to Nurse Kitty Canavan's side in the big nursery. Every room had its romance, of which the heroine was an ideal mother, for Kitty had invented to satisfy her motherless charge endless stories about a woman she had never seen, and of whom she had never heard anything except the name. This mother was still to be seen in the print-shop windows, where the child persistently worshipped her in beautiful pictures, and where every desirable object perceived for sale was purchased in imagination to give her pleasure.

“I will take that for muvver!” she would cry, while Kitty held her by the sleeve lest the pitch forward of her eagerness should make a crack in the jeweller's window.

“What does she want with the like of it in Heaven?” Kitty would urge; but Sara went on thinking that nothing in any heaven would prevent her mother's gladness at receiving a love-token from her little daughter.

She followed nurse daily with skipping-rope and hoop to the Linenhall gardens, and played “friar's ground” with a few select children not quite disapproved by Mrs. Canavan, or she sat on one of the weather-stained seats that marked, like mile-stones, the stages of journeys into elf-land. In the space of ten minutes, while Kitty was resting her rheumatic knee, what

visions to be seen! Trees drawing together, darkening and thickening into forests, the tall houses of the square beyond them dissolved in glamour, vistas of glorious shapings, half-discerned, opening on a distance of radiant possibilities, all unhappily dispersed by the too quick recovery from fatigue of Kitty Canavan's knee! Sara never spoke of these visions to Kitty, whose commonsense was typified to the child by the iron railings which returned, with the tall houses, to their ranks at Mrs. Canavan's order to march; neither did she implore that the knee might rest itself a little longer. Other suggestions of adventure relieved the monotony of the walk. Old Paul who stood grimly at the entrance to the inner quadrangle was himself a mystery, a living mark of interrogation perpetually putting queries which nobody answered. In his fur cap and long coat, and with his frowning parrot-like face (Sara thought of him as "Poll"), he might have stood for anything guarding the approaches to secret and outlying places skirting the limited area of every-day life. The grim and gruff old man seemed the impersonation of a denial or an impassable boundary. Within that guarded quadrangle what would be found by any child who could succeed in outwitting this dragon and gaining those inner precincts? Sometimes a sinister figure appeared as an angel with flaming sword, barring young feet from a paradise where fountains played and roses bloomed everlastingly in sunshine, while outer wintry walks were wet and dark. Or was it a cruel dungeon that lay beyond that gloomy arch, with "all who enter here leave hope behind" written over it; and the old man with his frown, might he not be the keeper of the immured and the endlessly miserable?

Occasionally there were other and more matter-of-fact experiences to be met with which were wholly delightful, the feeding of the sooty little sparrows, and the finding of treasure behind the bushes surrounding the outer sides of the quadrangle, to be sought by the forbidden paths beside which glared in black and white, hoisted on a pole, the warning

that trespassers would be prosecuted. To Sara the word ‘prosecuted’ was equivalent to anything horrible. ‘Executed’ would have expressed the vengeance of old Paul and his invisible masters quite as well. Never should small feet penetrate unpunished those so-called flower-beds where aucubas, myrtles, saxifrages, and flowering currants extended their arms and spread their skirts to keep out intruders.

Yet one day Sara made a plunge into the forbidden region and returned with booty. The prize was a book of patterns of printed cambrics, delicate fabrics with tiny flowers sprinkled over them in colours, ornamented with bands of embossed gold, and interleaved with papers of rich dyes to show off the muslins. At rare intervals one of these treasures would fall out of a window, and lie in the darkness among the scrubby plants, like a jewel in a cavern.

“You are not allowed to have it. Throw it back where you found it, or something will happen to you,” threatened Kitty.

“I’m going to keep it,” declared Sara, turning over the leaves in a rapture.

“What do you want with such a bit of rubbish?” said Mrs. Canavan.

“It’s a sort of thing that other things can be made of,” said Sara.

“What are you going to do with it?” persisted Kitty.

“I don’t quite know yet,” said Sara, gloating over her treasure, “but I’m sure there are all kinds of doings in it.”

“I tell you, child, old Paul will persecute you.”

“He shan’t see it,” said Sara; and neither he did, for it was hidden under her coat as she walked intrepidly past him on her way to the entrance gate.

A whole community of tiny dolls were dressed, on a wet day, in the scraps of dainty cambric, and became living creatures in Sara’s little world, bearing her company delightfully in return for her charity in clothing their nakedness. More wintry weather produced her invention of a box for Nurse Canavan’s needles and cottons, ornamented with the

papers of crimson and purple, and the embossed gold bands of the cambric-pattern book.

Having tasted the sweets of these first attempts, Sara's constructiveness began to design still more fascinating efforts at creation. Provided with pencils and a box of paints, she set to work on a series of pictures, of wonderful persons and scenes, discerned by herself alone through a maze of scratches and colour-blots. A caricature of old Paul, and a presentment intended as a faithful and flattering portrait of Nurse Kitty at her knitting were among the first finished productions of her energies in this direction, and were hung on the nursery wall by Mrs. Canavan, who regarded them as works of unrivalled genius.

These were the ways of her solitary child-life in the town, but at Bleachgreens she was a creature unknown to the Stevenson house and the Linenhall gardens. The Montgomery children knew her only as a romp, first in every active sport, and ready for any risky adventure. She invented original games to suit boys as well as girls, and on stay-at-home days could be counted on as a narrator of impromptu stories to a weather-bound company in the school-room.

The sojourns at Bleachgreens gave her infinite delight. The house, standing on grassy slopes above the river Freshwater, was lively as a beehive, and the hum of the great mills on the other side of the shining flood sounded like the very murmur of human sociability and comfort. The gardens were places where real flowers bloomed, and there were no lurking ogres; the orchards teemed with fruit; the glamour of life shone on the over-the-water green plain, striped with linen whitening in the sun, and the long avenue with workers' cottages in clusters between river, "mill-race" and "tail-race," three streams of water ever moving in the sunshine. The comings and goings of many busy people at the ringing of summoning or releasing bells, even the slow movement of flocks of sheep on a not distant hill, and the flights of innumerable pigeons, contributed to the vivid impression of wholesome, active life. Then what

joy in the rambles through the surrounding country of green fields and low hills, by roads bordered with flowering hedges, wild rose, hawthorn, woodbine dipping into the tiny stream that nourished the primroses and violets nestling among the ferns in the dyke.

As time went on other delights were in the summer sojourns at Bangor, on the shores of the Lough, when Sara was included in the Montgomery seaside arrangements. Here the wonder of the sea was opened up to her, and wild suggestions of bigger ocean life lurked in the clefts of the steep rocks; and the long Kinnegar, stretching away above the high cliffs, was to be taken as leading to the regions of the World's End, the goal of so many wayfarers in faeryland. Returning home one Sunday evening from a long walk on the Kinnegar a new experience dropped on the girl, an arousing from the dreams of little-childhood to the glorious consciousness of a wide-awake soul.

Down a narrow, rugged path through bristling furze-bushes the children tramped, inebriated with ozone and riotous with health and spirits. A turn of the Common suddenly showed them a glimpse of the town, a field of ripe corn lying between, flanked by a sun-pierced woodland. Across the distant horizon fell the tones of an evening bell, as if on the golden shafts of the sunset, dropping three mellow notes, the “lin, lan, lone” of the poet's memory, making the whole world vibrate with a new spiritual rapture. Was it prophecy of a glorious future even on earth, or was it promise of what eye hath never seen and ear hath never heard of?

Sara, as if born into a new life, walked a mile silently, basking in “the light that never was on sea or land,” unheeding and unhearing the laughter and chatter of her companions.

It was on this very evening when, nearing home, they found a strange boy standing at the door as if waiting for someone.

“I say, who are you?” said Mark, hurrying towards him.
“Are you looking for any of us?”

"Mr. Montgomery brought me here," said the lad, "and he told me to wait for the children, who would soon be returning from their walk."

The children gathered round the stranger, and received him into their little world, each in his own characteristic fashion. Mark decided that he promised to be a manly fellow. Hugh thought he looked aggressive. Herminia found that he was badly dressed, Juliet and Olive stood in awe of him, as one more boy who would regard them as duffers, being girls. Sara felt instinctively something pathetic in his air of accepted aloofness, and pitied him without knowing why. He was a tall, well-built boy about twelve years old, with a shadow under his black brows that seemed threatening to prove him an uncongenial companion, but his southern pallor of cheek appealed to the rosy-faced children, and his musical foreign accent softened the abruptness of his manner of speech.

"Are you coming to stay with us?" asked Mark more gently.

"I suppose so," said the stranger. "Your father invited me."

"Come along then," said Hugh. "We are all jolly hungry for our tea!"

At the same moment Mr. and Mrs. Montgomery were talking about what was to be done for the young stranger, the son of an early friend of the mill-owner, who had failed in life, gone to Italy in search of health, and married an Italian peasant. Both parents had been dead for some years, and Robert Montgomery, being the boy's guardian, had left him till now in care of the *padre* of his native village. But the time had come for placing him at an English school, and taking thought for his future. Robert had not told his wife that there was scarcely enough money provided to give him a proper education, and he was relieved to find that she did not object to receiving him at Bleachgreens for the holidays.

The idea of many boys in the house did not, in fact, trouble Jane. Her husband had power to ensure a successful opening



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"WHAT IS YOUR NAME?" ASKED SARA

in life for boys. But who could provide for the future of girls? She had no objection to the addition of another boy to the household, though Sara, in a like position, would not have been acceptable.

The strange lad refused to enter the house till called by the master.

“Mr. Montgomery told me to wait here, and I will wait till he sends for me,” he persisted.

The hungry children laughed, and rushed in to tea, all but Sara, who lingered at the door, looking over to the low sea wall where the boy had seated himself.

After a few moments of uncertainty she crossed the road and spoke to him.

They eyed each other gravely for a moment or two, as children will on first acquaintance with each other.

“What is your name?” asked Sara, by way of opening a conversation.

“Arno Warrender,” said the boy.

“Arno! What a curious name!”

“I was born in Florence, and called for the river.”

“You are a foreigner!”

“My father was an Englishman, my grandmother was Irish, and my mother was Italian. But I have nobody alive belonging to me.”

Sara felt that there was a sense of forlornness underlying the defiant manner of the boy, and she began to make her own case similar to his, out of sympathy.

“My mother is dead, and my father is always at war. I never see him.”

“Then you’re not a Montgomery?”

“No, I am a Stevenson. But the Montgomeries are very kind to me, and I’m sure they will be kind to you. Will you not come in to tea?”

Arno hesitated, and the shadow in his eyes was a little lifted.

Just then Mr. Montgomery appeared at the door, and

signed to them, and they both went into the house, Sara leading briskly, as sure of her welcome; Arno following more slowly, as not so sure of his.

At school-room tea Mrs. Montgomery spoke to Arno with smiling patronage, asking him many questions on matters of which he could not possibly know anything. Between these assaults on his understanding Mark and Hugh talked on about their own affairs, using slang words which were utterly unintelligible to the stranger, at the same time feeling quite polite if they gave him an occasional opening to "chip in," as they called it, and deciding that he was a duffer for missing his opportunities. Meanwhile the boy sat silent, resenting the want of tact in his entertainers, which hid his keen and conscious intelligence under a cloud of seeming stupidity.

"Mother has diagnosed him, I bet," said Hugh to his brother as they left the table. "She will take him to the drawing-room and lecture him; and the fellow deserves it for behaving like a tame cat or a mollycoddle."

"I don't agree that he behaved like either one or the other," said Mark.

Chapter III

“He is different from us”

IT was Robert Montgomery's plan to give his boys as liberal an education as though he had intended them for the learned professions, and to make use of the holiday intervals to familiarize them with the ways, the habits, and the outlook of “business” men. If he took them a trip from home it was a tour round the manufacturing towns of England, and if he gave them a book to read it was the biography of a man like Arkwright with his work in Lancashire, a history of the origin and progress of flax-growing and linen-weaving in Ulster, or of the suppressed woollen manufactures, and the fostered French poplin-making in other parts of Ireland. The arrival of Arno gave a fresh stimulus to his efforts in this direction. He believed in his own magnanimous intention to give the son of his dead friend a start in life equal to that of his own sons, and realized that the new boy was handicapped by his Italian rearing. A day in Belfast was to be devoted at once to introducing Arno to all the most noted centres of business activity in the town. As Robert had robust notions about girls also, they were not always excluded from such expeditions, and on the present occasion Sara and Juliet were permitted to be of the party, Herminia, as the eldest, preferring to go shopping with her mother, and Olive, who had a cold, being obliged to stay at home. It was suggestive of the character of the mill-owner that nobody was surprised to see the tall, alert figure and square, energetic face marching

at the head of his band of boys and girls for a raid on the docks, the ship-building yards, the factories, boarding merchant ships, and steering his flock through the excitements and dangers of the machinery of other people's mills.

The party was invited to have tea with Mrs. Fontaine, an elderly lady with a decided character of her own, and an ideal differing from that of Robert Montgomery, on some essential points, but meeting his aims with frankness and vigour on such matters as the adoption of Arno Warrender, whose father had been her distant relative, and the necessity for taking an interest in Sara Stevenson, who had been left to the care of her father's servants.

When the expedition arrived at the Linenhall, and Robert decided on sending the girls on to Mrs. Fontaine while he took the boys only to his office within the quadrangle, Sara felt a momentary disappointment. She had promised herself a triumph over the terrible old Paul, pictured herself walking unconcernedly past him, penetrating to the mysterious precincts unrebuked by his frown; but consolation came later with the reflection that if she had lost an opportunity of acquainting herself with the reality of a linen merchant's chambers, she had kept unbroken her dreams of an Alhambra.

The dainty table prepared by Mrs. Fontaine for her guests proclaimed her a child-lover. Her own children were long dead, but she treated those of other people as though they were the return of her particular flock. The children of the poor certainly reaped the largest benefit from this peculiarity, but she had a fine toleration for the children of the rich also, holding them as not yet responsible for the selfishness and follies of their elders.

Sara stood in a little awe of Mrs. Fontaine's bustling, lecturing ways, seeing that the active spirit of the woman was the enemy of all dreams and fancies, but she was sufficiently sensitive and intelligent to rejoice in her unfailing geniality, and to understand something of her consistent philosophy. Personally the lady rather charmed her. There was a pleasant

quaintness about the tall, thin figure scantily draped in a strait black gown, the close cap of white gathered net drawn over the silver-and-gold hair, and tied uncompromisingly under the chin, a dress which ignored the fashion that clothes old and young alike, relegating the change that ought to come with years to the moment of decrepitude.

Another agreeable peculiarity of Mrs. Fontaine was her habit of appealing to the young as equals, in proportion to their receptivity and responsiveness, measuring them as companions by their intelligence instead of by their years. The resentment of a growing mind, alive with big thoughts, at being credited with stupidity by full-grown dullness was never experienced by any of the clever old lady's juvenile acquaintances.

As she sat confronting Sara and Juliet, the children felt no dread of weariness during the hour that had to be spent before the arrival of Robert and the boys should give the signal. She began at once to talk to them about Arno Warrender, not exhorting them to be kind to the strange boy, as though she thought they were likely to be cruel to him, but interesting them in his story as the hero of a romance. When Juliet's attention began to wander she was invited to visit the parrot in another room, and the keen questioning in Sara's eyes was rewarded by the old lady's confidence.

“Why was Mr. Montgomery displeased at Arno for asking if there were no picture galleries in the town?” asked Sara.

“Because, my dear, Robert Montgomery regards the weaving of linen as a thousand times more important than the painting of pictures. If he did not he would not be fit for his particular work in the world. He brought the boy out to show him the glories of trade and manufacture. Probably the boy asked this question just after he had been instructed in the wonderful adaptability of some little cog wheel to its uses in machinery.”

“Yes,” said Sara. “How did you know?”

“By the usual course of things. Arno, I fear, will be more

interested in pictures than machinery, and Robert will fear it also."

"Why fear it? Is not art a very splendid thing in the world?"

"Good art, yes. But Arno's father was not a good artist. He lost everything else through straining after what he could not do. He was a weak amateur who aspired to make art a profession, and failed. Robert loved the man, but he despised the artist. To hanker after art would not be the best way in which Arno could engage his most thorough sympathies."

Sara pondered a few moments.

"But Arno might be different from his father," she said. "The Italians were great painters, and his mother was an Italian."

"A good suggestion," said Mrs. Fontaine, with her look of equality in recognition of a young mind's thought, the look that was so encouraging. "But the mother was not of an educated class. Warrender knew her first as a model. She was a beautiful strong woman, and made him a devoted wife, powerful in fortitude of spirit and in bodily frame. When they were very poor and had to travel on foot she carried him on her back when he broke down by the way. If there is anything of that in Arno it will come out, whether he takes to turning wheels or painting pictures."

"He is different from us," said Sara thoughtfully.

"It is too soon to judge," said Mrs. Fontaine. "We don't know him yet. What did Mr. Montgomery say about the pictures?"

"He said, 'Yes, we have a few; but you must remember that you are no longer in Italy.' Arno looked as if he couldn't possibly forget that. And Uncle Robert did not say anything about taking us to see the few pictures."

Mr. Montgomery arriving with the boys, the conversation was ended in a manner quite unsatisfactory to Sara. She wanted to hear more about Arno from Mrs. Fontaine, who knew about his father and mother, because he was so interest-

ing a figure in her experience, so “different” from the rest, with a difference that, strangely enough, seemed attractive only to herself.

After tea the children were sent to amuse themselves in the garden, and the two elders walked up and down talking of the new member of the Montgomery family, while Mrs. Fontaine perceived how quick Sara had been in estimating the impression made on Robert by the boy’s remarks on much that he had seen during the day.

“He’s not stupid,” said the mill-owner, “and he’s not unobservant, but apathetic about some things that the other boys are keen upon. I hope he won’t prove a disappointment.”

Mrs. Fontaine wanted to say several things on this, but she only remarked :

“I am glad he is not stupid.”

“Not at all. But, you see, I can only advance him on certain lines——”

“Let him run on his own line for a while, and see where it will take him,” said the old lady. “He is young, and there is plenty of time.”

“He must go to school. I intend him to go with the boys after the holidays. In the course of a year or so we shall see. I have not told Jane that there is no money provided for the lad ; anything to be done for him must be done by myself.”

Mrs. Fontaine, who knew Jane, made no immediate remark. But presently she said in her emphatic way :

“Robert, I think there is something in the boy.”

“I don’t doubt there is something.”

“Be generous to him in ways as well as in means.”

“I will give him a chance in the mill.”

“You are sending him to school first. At present he seems visibly Italian. Have patience. He will probably come back to you an English translation. As you say, after a year or so we shall see. I had a warm regard for his father.”

“So had I, or I should not trouble about him.”

"And a warm admiration for his peasant mother."

"I know nothing about her."

"The father was weak, the mother was strong. The Italian element will be strong in the son."

"That does not sound encouraging to me."

"I shall be surprised if Arno disappoints you."

"Well, Mrs. Fontaine, I know your admirable optimism. It has its share of usefulness. As I have already said, I see his father in him, and I remember that his father was a failure in life, a man whom everyone loved, but nobody could help."

"Now, Robert, don't let us begin to wrangle. You are an optimist yourself except when you measure yourself with optimism run mad in me, as you have said yourself more than once. You and I must always agree to differ as to the meaning and the examples of 'failure.' A man or even a woman, by your leave, may be a failure in one sense, in one walk of life, a success in another. If our friend Warrender had enjoyed health to work out his talents, who knows what he might have done? His father opposed his desire to be an artist, and his own poor physique deprived him of the energies necessary for a successful struggle with obstacles and difficulties. If you can make a thriving tradesman out of Arno, well and good, but if Warrender should have done nothing more than produce a son who would inherit his own gift in higher form, combined with health and strong purpose, then I should think he had done enough in the world to blot the word failure as written after his name."

"There you go. Leaping to the most remote conclusions."

"I acknowledge that I am only reading between the lines, lines that I see on the boy's brow. I may mistake the language, misread the print——"

"For Heaven's sake don't put it into his mind that he is a genius. Give me a chance to benefit him. If you judge by appearances, which appeal to you so much,—why, any Italian organ-grinder might supply you with that kind of 'lines' for your character-reading."

Chapter IV

“So standing up, so marching about !”

THE boys had departed for school, and Sara had returned home when a telegram to Robert Montgomery announced that Colonel Stevenson had been terribly injured in battle. His lower limbs were shattered, amputation was necessary, and if life were spared, it must be at the cost of future freedom.

The remainder of his years must be spent in a chair, and, in case of his complete recovery, he would return in a crippled condition to take up a new kind of existence in his native country with his daughter.

The great question was, how to break the news to Sara. Robert Montgomery shrank from the task.

“Nonsense !” said Jane. “A child will not think much about it. I will go with pleasure, and get the thing done at once.”

“I don’t think you need take the trouble, Jane. Mrs. Fontaine will do it.”

“You know that I never feel trouble in doing anything for the good of others, especially children. At least you ought to know. You are fond of placing Mrs. Fontaine very high in such matters, but I should be glad if you could tell me how she can possibly know as much about the management of young people as one who is herself a mother.”

Robert had learned to quarrel as little as possible with his

wife, for unless he gave his temper its full fling, which brought him remorse, he was sure to get the worst of it. The ingenious windings of Jane's self-will, self-deception and power of setting up a personal grievance as a surprise in the midst of a general difficulty formed a maze which the straightforward man found himself unable to penetrate. The best way to escape it was to refuse to enter the labyrinth, and Robert said :

"At all events let us wait till to-morrow, and take time to think about it."

This was in the morning, and after he had departed to town on business, Jane regulated the household affairs at Bleach-greens for the day with more than usual alacrity, and proceeded to disobey her husband with a sense of duty to be done. She told herself that she was very sorry for Sara, but the girl must learn to bear her share of the troubles of the world. To spare her for twenty-four hours would be doing her a wrong. Robert, despite his masculine strength, was a faint-hearted man. Women, at an emergency, were, after all, the only heroes.

Sara was busy arranging the little affairs of the solitary life to which she had returned after her social experiences of the summer. The presence of a large doll seated in a chair watching her movements gave her an odd sense of comfort, and the dog stretched on the floor in front of it was even more highly valued from the point of view of companionship. Brownie, the Irish terrier, was a wise guardian, and Bimba, the doll, was a creature to be cared for. Both enabled their mistress to hear her own voice talking when Nurse Canavan was not on the scene. While arranging her book-shelves and portfolios she gave her dumb companions a lively report of her late experiences.

After a time, however, the audience slept, and silence reigned in the room, while Sara was lost in criticism of certain drawings of her own, the more interesting to her because of the allusions to art in the conversation at Mrs. Fontaine's. Growing tired of this she put the sleeping doll to

bed and established herself in a window-seat with Brownie and a volume of Vasari's *Lives of the Painters*.

After a quarter of an hour's absorption, during which she forgot the imminence of a call from Mrs. Canavan to prepare for a walk, she raised her eyes and saw the Montgomery carriage coming down the street. Mrs. Montgomery was seated in it alone, her face looking particularly energetic under a plume of black feathers; for though Jane was as a rule fond of lively colours, she had now dressed herself suitably to a mournful occasion.

A few minutes later found Sara in the gloomy dining-room where the lady awaited her.

The child came in smiling, with a reflection of happiness at Bleachgreens shining on her face.

“Well, Sara, how do you do this morning? Quite well, I hope? That is right. I am sorry to say I have come on a painful errand. But we cannot have everything as we like it in this world. Something unfortunate is certain to happen.”

Sara's mind made a blind rush at possibilities of misfortune, but in the sudden confusion no shape appeared to her.

“You don't speak. You are not of an anxious nature. Fortunately you are not constituted as I am. When did you last hear from your father, Sara?”

The knife had struck to the heart.

“Is my father dead?” asked Sara.

“No, better perhaps if he were. I may as well tell you at once as you take it so quietly. He has been badly injured in battle. His legs have been shot off. But there—they say he may recover. Tut, tut, tut, this is all nonsense!” Jane flew at the bell and rang it violently. The child was stretched on the floor in a swoon.

The servants came running, and Jane lectured all the time while they were applying restoratives to their young mistress.

“No self-control—result of want of training. A healthy girl of her age collapsing under the first touch of unpleasantness!

Well, thank heaven I am not accountable. Miss Stevenson is not my daughter."

With a wild cry Mrs. Canavan had thrown herself on her knees beside her darling.

"Oh, ma'am, what have you done to her? Sara, my lamb, are you gone from me? Oh, what will her father say?"

"Throw some water on her face," said Mrs. Montgomery. "What have I done to her? Am I accountable for the happenings of war? Here I am, come to break the news to her, and I am blamed because Colonel Stevenson has had his legs shot off."

Another scream from Mrs. Canavan, and murmurs of horror from other servants behind her.

"For God's sake, ma'am, go away, will you? She's coming to, and the sight of you will bring it back to her."

Jane was not sorry to get away, and returned to Bleach-greens musing on the ingratitude which so constantly ill-requited her efforts to take difficult tasks on herself in service to others. She had hardly quitted the Stevenson door-steps when Mrs. Fontaine's hand was on the knocker. Mrs. Montgomery saw her, and, looking backward from the carriage, nodded.

"That old woman thought to be before me. Robert's doing, of course. Thank heaven I had courage to take my own place and do a duty so evidently mine!"

Mrs. Fontaine's thought was, "God pity the child! I am too late."

"Oh, ma'am, but I am glad to see you," cried Kitty. "My lamb is murdered. Mrs. Montgomery's been here, same as with a knife in her hand. And the Colonel's half shot away, she says. I'm hopin' she's only gone mad and invented it."

"It's too true, Kitty, and we can't blame Mrs. Montgomery for what happened in Africa. Where is the child? How is she taking it?"

"I've got her to bed, ma'am. Fainted dead, she did. And now she's cryin' her little heart out, and the dog lickin' her."

“I’m going to see her. And now, Kitty, you’re to be sensible. This will be a change for all of us. The Colonel will be coming home, and you must have your wits about you. He’ll be a man used to giving orders, and he’ll send everybody to the right about.”

There was an immediate reaction in the mind of Mrs. Canavan. Her master appeared suddenly set up again as a very living and imperious soldier, such a one as she had been proud of.”

“Oh, ma’am, will he still be like that?”

“Of course he will. More so than ever. He is coming home to live here, and that is something to be glad of, isn’t it?”

“Oh, but I’m glad to hear you sayin’ it, ma’am—Miss Sara, here’s Mrs. Fontaine comin’ to comfort you; God bless her!”

Sara sat up in bed and threw herself into the old woman’s arms.

“O Mrs. Fontaine, could God let it happen? If I had been Him I wouldn’t.”

“You’re not God, dear, and He knows what we don’t know—why He has let it be done.”

“Such a good man. Such a great soldier, like the heroes in the Greek history. So standing up, so marching about—and now——?”

A fresh burst of weeping finished Sara’s agonized and disjointed sentences.

“Cry as much as you like, dear, and let me talk. Now this great marching-about, standing-up father, away at a distance like the Greek heroes, was never at home with his little girl, and though she admired him so much she really did not know him, and could hardly love him.”

“I do love him,” protested Sara. “I have his picture and his letters.”

“Neither a picture nor letters is actually a man. He has your photos and your letters too, yet he does not know his little daughter who is growing and changing every day.

Neither of you has ever heard the sound of the other's voice. The thing that has happened will change all that, Sara."

"Wouldn't he have come home, sometime, without being broken to pieces?"

"He is so very much of a soldier that I think he would have kept on delaying his return, perhaps for ever. God is sending him now, and if he has cut off the marching about, it is because something else is intended for him to do."

"He will break his heart!"

"No, he won't. He is a brave man and he will bear it. And now I come to an important point. You must help him to bear it, Sara. You are only a little girl, but this new duty of love will make a woman of you."

"O Mrs. Fontaine, do you really think he will let me?"

"I really think you will be the joy of his life if you are as wise and good as I expect you to be. You are full of life, child, far more life than you know what to do with. You are going to get employment for it, now."

Sara was sitting very erect, and her eyes were shining.

"I will get up now," she said. "Don't you think I might write him a letter, a very particular letter?"

"He will be glad to get it."

"And there will be ever so much to do to have a nice place for him. The house is all so dark except my little corner of it."

"You will have plenty to do, brightening it up. He will want a nice study, and fresh things in the best bedroom——"

"Oh, I know, I know!" cried Sara, springing up. "I see it all. Will you show me what to do to make the house pleasant? I won't cry or worry any more. How soon do you think he will be home, Mrs. Fontaine?"

"In a few weeks perhaps. How can we tell? You must write your letter and ask all about it. We shall need all the time, I dare say, to make the preparations. Will you come home with me now, and spend the day and night with me, and to-morrow come with me to see a poor family whose father and

bread-winner has been killed by the machinery in one of the mills? Killed, Sara; what do you think of that? No dear father coming home to be nursed by his little daughter. Never coming home any more, and no bread in the house. Yet God will take care of them, too, Sara.”

If Sara was not exactly comforted, she was at least roused to think of something helpful to be done; always a relief in sorrow. She was eager in accepting the invitation of her friend, who reflected as they went along on this pathetic situation in which so young a creature as Sara was thankful for the companionship of an old woman like herself.

Nurse Canavan and Sara and Brownie spent some days at Mrs. Fontaine's, and visited the family of the man who had been killed by the machinery of a mill. And a letter was written to Colonel Stevenson.

Chapter V

Sara goes to Italy

SARA had a long time to wait for the happiness of seeing her father, whose recovery was not so rapid as his friends had been led to expect. When able to move he was forbidden an immediate return to the damps and chills of his native country. A sunny climate was recommended, and Florence was decided on as a place of sojourn.

So Sara, instead of receiving him in the rooms she was constantly preparing for him, was called on to set out for Italy, accompanied by Kitty Canavan.

Colonel Stevenson had written to Robert Montgomery on leaving his hospital :

“I have now to come back to life by a way which is quite unknown to me,—a road to be travelled without feet. My doctors advise a round-about route to my own place—if I have indeed a place—among my old friends. I long to have my little girl with me. She will have to stand to me for the latter half of a career suddenly cut short. My old friend, Mrs. Fontaine, writes to me that I have still some uses in this world, and that one of them may be to superintend the education of my daughter. Mag was always a wise woman, but it is a far cry from cannon balls to girls’ school. I feel, at all events, that I must accustom myself to my new state of being, before introducing my child to a disabled father, and so I will beg of you to continue to look after her a little longer, until I find myself ready to summon her.”

A year had been passed by Stevenson in the mental and physical struggle to regain a healthy condition ; and Sara was at last on her way to join him. The brave man was waiting in his chair-carriage, which he wheeled, himself, outside the railway station, and there was nothing in either his broad, square shoulders or his bold features to suggest exceptional physical affliction. Head well up, and eyes keenly expectant, he awaited the verdict of his child, as he had been used to meet the bayonet of an enemy.

Sara, with both her hands in his, gave him back looks that were a reflection of his own, though he saw other looks, too, in the dark glowing eyes and lips tremulous with feeling, and the smooth symmetrical brow that promised good common-sense, though covering a multitude of unconventional thoughts and aspirations.

"It will do. We shall get on," he said. "This is not a girl to be ashamed of her old broken-down father."

"O father, I am so *proud* of you !" cried Sara, enthusiasm extinguishing shyness.

"Softly, softly, child ! Tolerance and patience will be enough tribute to pay me out of the small means that life will place in your hands. But I think we shall be able to live together ; eh, Kitty Canavan ?"

"O Master !" was all Mrs. Canavan could say, for her tears.

Colonel Stevenson had taken rooms on the Lungarno with the intention of exploring the city, first of all, and of moving into the country parts as the season advanced. He was not a man of books and pictures, and his ideas as to Sara's education were vague. She had been learning rapidly with a governess at home, but the Colonel did not desire the presence of any such person as coming between him and his child. He would provide her with different teachers in different languages at various hours of the day. Sara's most pressing desire was to become familiar with Italian.

"Let us find the Italian teacher first," said her father.

"I wish we could meet with Arno's old *padre*. He is poor, and a teacher."

"Who is Arno?"

"He is Mr. Montgomery's boy who came from this country. He was called for the river. They lived in the Casentino. The *padre* was good to Arno after his mother died. He teaches Italian to English people."

"Then Arno is a friend of yours. Write to him for the *padre's* address. We may make the old gentleman's acquaintance in the spring."

Arno's delight at learning of his beloved country from Sara, and his intelligent directions as to points of interest in the city of Florence aroused the Colonel's attention.

"It is a singular document," he said, handing the letter back to Sara. "I don't see him at a mill-owner's desk in Belfast. So Robert Montgomery means to model a flax-spinner out of this Tuscan clay!"

"Arno does not love the desk, but he is trying to do his duty. When he has done with school he is to live at Bleach-greens, and Mr. Montgomery is very good to him."

Having heard the boy's whole story, Colonel Stevenson remembered his family and circumstances, fitted them into a large and wide-spreading circle of friends, long left behind him.

"Isn't it a pity that Arno hadn't a chance like mine?" said Sara as she walked by her father's chair, while he steered his way through the galleries among pictures and sculptures. "If his father had lived he could have studied to be a painter."

"His father made nothing of it," said the Colonel. "Better for him to stick to the linen-weaving."

"He wants to do right. But it makes him cross," said Sara thoughtfully.

"Cross, is he? There is nothing so cross as an unsuccessful artist, who thinks he was born to be Michelangelo, and, for some inexplicable reason, has failed to attain to the position. Whether is it better to be a cross but prosperous flax-spinner or a painter without power, who is ill-tempered because the

gods have refused him their most rare and most marvellous gifts?"

"Isn't there a way of getting on at what you love to do without being cross?" asked Sara while she stared at a magnificent picture which did not appeal to her.

"The best way to conquer discontent is to suffer deeply," said the Colonel quietly. And Sara instantly remembered with admiration her father's good humour, and his affliction. At the same time she saw no parallel between the thwarted aspirations of life beginning, and the cheerful resignation of life on the decline, which had first seen its ambitions more or less realized.

She was silent from the weight of her thought, till, glancing down, she caught a wistful look on the strong frank face turned to her.

"O father—you——"

She could say no more, but he turned away his head, satisfied at having received even more recognition of his meaning than he had looked for.

"Everyone cannot be like you, father," Sara added softly.

"I should be sorry, dear, if they were," he said, and moved on in his little carriage to another and more attractive picture.

Colonel Stevenson was a man of determination, and when he made up his mind that a thing was worth doing he did it thoroughly. He had come here, almost at haphazard, for his health, without any particular liking for what, to so many, are the charms of the place. But since he had discovered that the tastes and perhaps talents of his daughter rendered a sojourn in the land of art and beauty of immense advantage to her, he was resolved to put himself at her service. What she liked he would like, what she wanted to do he would do.

"Now, little Sara, this chair shall be wheeled in any direction you please, only you must remember that your father is like a man who has died and gone to another world. Don't forget that he is a soldier, cut off from the active work which was his portion, and ignorant of the things that give you

delight. I never had the least inclination for anything not concerned with matters offensive and defensive. Your mother was fond of books and art, though she had little opportunity for cultivating her taste. You have her eyes, but there is something of the Stevenson spirit about your mouth. You will be more militant than she was, but you have also her tenderness——”

Much more in this strain was poured into Sara's ears from time to time, and, enchanted with the power put in her hands, she led her father about, “like a dog on a string,” as he said, learning more with her eyes than even from the instructions of her teachers. While lessons were going on at certain hours, the Colonel would sit in the window with a book in his hand, but following the lectures to his daughter at the table.

“I am learning wonderful things,” he said. “Now, about this Dante. One has always heard of him. But I never knew he had been a soldier. I can't pretend to understand his poetry, but when I hear that he fought for his country, served in the front rank of the cavalry at the battle of Campaldino, then he begins to engage my attention and my sympathies.”

The *padre* smiled. This conversation was on the occasion of his first visit to the rooms on the Lungarno, he having come from the Casentino to make acquaintance with these friends of Arno's.

“Yes, he began as a soldier,” said the *padre*, “and of the right metal, as his own words record, speaking of the fight, ‘Wherein I had much dread, and at the end the greatest gladness by reason of the varying chances of that battle.’ For a good many years afterwards he lived in the strife of politics, the struggle for great reforms; and during these years he saw the democratic government established, and this beloved city immensely improved and exquisitely adorned, by the Palazzo Vecchio, the Duomo, and others of our most splendid churches. In July, 1295, he spoke in the General Council of the Comune concerning the Ordinances of Justice, and in the same

year he matriculated in the Arte dei Medici e Speziali, the great guild which included the painters and booksellers. He was then thirty years old, and we have him already both soldier and politician, putting his energies to the founding of a great Republic."

"Humph!" said the Colonel. "I wonder, being engaged in such noble enterprises, how he ever found time to write poetry."

"Ah, but he was always the poet. Many years before his entrance into public life, when only a youth of eighteen, he was possessed by his soul's ideal. 'The most sweet salutation of the lady Beatrice' had kindled in his imagination that white fire which was to burn in many hearts through all time, and in many souls for all eternity."

The Colonel looked a little embarrassed.

"I am only a soldier," he said meekly. "I see your hero better on the battle-field, or in the political arena."

"Dante belongs to every order," said the *padre*. "A noble by family of the great Alighieri; through his father, a notary, belonging to the Greater Guilds who had jurisdiction over all the Arts in a Republic of merchants, to be governed only by those ascribed to the Arts in which every grade of nobility was more a loss than a privilege. Thus he was at once a noble and a burgher: restraining the old nobility and exalting trade by the Ordinances of Justice; ordinances which recognized as honourable the seven Arti Maggiori engaged in wholesale commerce, exportation and importation; and the fourteen Arti Minori, carrying on the retail traffic and internal trade of the city, with power over its laws."

"A full active life," said the Colonel approvingly. "Art, trade, law-giving, fighting."

"And garnering the experience of events and characters which enabled him to punish his enemies and reward his saints and heroes when fortune turned against him, and the city whose prosperity and grandeur he had helped to build up cast him into banishment."

"A common experience of the ambitious," said the Colonel, "though seldom with such a result."

"Not always can a man gibbet his foes for all eternity, or at least for all time, while at the same time he makes himself immortal like the gods of old, and reads lessons to the men who follow him down the centuries. His circumstances, glorious and bitter, rounded his career to perfection. Had the Guelf magnates, the new nobility which had grown on the ruins of the old, not quarrelled among themselves, Dante had remained the imperious member of the new Signoria and perhaps ruled as Gonfaloniere over the great Florentine Republic. But his banishment was destined to be the great gain of mankind. Fierce and gloomy in his exile, the shadows of alien cities, the loneliness of Can Grande's palace, the dark depths of the moon-lit amphitheatre at Verona, became a background for the flame-lit scenes of his imagination. Dante's disappointed spirit writhed under its penal suffering, but the world has been the gainer by the treasure of the *Divina Commedia*."

The *padre* was a tall old man, a little stooped, with eyes startlingly black under white brows and hair, serious, dignified, courteous, with a gentle smile; and, to English eyes, he was badly dressed. At first the Colonel treated him with the respect of tolerance, indulgent to his evident simplicity and sincerity. As time went on tolerance and indulgence were lost in something like reverence, with keen appreciation of his value as a guide and companion. Intercourse by language was at first a difficulty. The Stevensons, however, were progressing with their lessons in Italian, and the *padre* had learned something of their tongue from Warrender, his friend and the father of Arno; and between North-of-Ireland Italian and Casentino English the trio contrived to understand each other.

Chapter VI

“ Every striving Soul a Success before God ”

THE *padre*, who was more or less superannuated in his duties at home, was persuaded by the Colonel to make arrangements for spending some weeks with him in his rooms on the Lungarno, as teacher and guide. The days were filled with delightful experiences, and the three curiously different figures were seen daily moving about the city, the brave, fresh-coloured face and broad shoulders of the disabled soldier, impelled forward on wheels, the eagle-browed old cleric on one side, and the alert eager-eyed little maid on the other making a group on which many looked with interest. From storied bridge to bridge of the river, from church to gallery, and from gallery to church they went about, enjoying, criticising, enquiring, now stirred, excited, as living in past scenes of history, now absorbed in the beauties and wonders of religious art. The Piazza della Signoria, where the great heart of Savonarola was brought to dust; the Duomo; the Baptistery with its gates of which Michelangelo said: “They are so beautiful that they would do well for the Gates of Paradise”; the Shepherd’s Tower, declared by Ruskin to be “the model and mirror of perfect architecture,” the innumerable glorified spots with their glamour of spiritual suggestion, lurid tragedy, and material beauty, all were haunted with fascination. The martyrdoms, the burnings and sackings of

cruel ages have not marred the splendours of man's noblest creations or dimmed the lustre of his faith, because God's effacing and re-creating angels are for ever following on the track of destruction, and sowing in new furrows made by upheavals of the earth.

In the ancient Baptistery the Colonel again found his peculiar sympathies aroused. The early Florentines, mingled of rude Etruscans from Fiesole and Cæsar's soldiers and civilizers from Rome, building their grand temple to Mars as inauguration of their power and prosperity, appealed to him. He was one with the Romans exulting over their conquest of Fiesole, and sending masters of art from Rome, with costly marbles on ships sailing up the Arno, to erect such a temple as should be a worthy tribute to their god of war. He listened with keen interest while the *padre* read from the old chronicle :

"Right noble and beauteous did they make it, with eight faces, and when they had done it with great diligence they consecrated it to their god, Mars, who was the god of the Romans ; and they had him carved in marble, in the shape of a knight armed on horseback. They set him upon a marble column in the midst of that temple, and him did they hold in great reverence, and adored as their god, what time Paganism lasted in Florence. And we find that the said temple was commenced at the time that Octavian Augustus reigned, and that it was erected under the ascendancy of such a constellation that it will last well-nigh to eternity."

"Is it the very same building standing still?" asked the Colonel, gazing upward through the dark interior where the shadows seem to brood over the mysteries of past ages.

"Of that we are hardly sure," said the *padre*. "Some hold that this is an early Christian temple constructed on the site of the temple of Mars ; but there is reason to believe that it is the original pile, converted to Christian use."

"Is the statue to be seen?"

"Oh, no. It was an equestrian statue and stood where

the Magdalene and the Baptist are now before us. When Christianity took possession of the place it was removed, and set on a tower by the side of the Arno. The old chronicler says :

“ ‘ The Florentines took up their idol, which they called the God Mars, and set him upon a high tower near the river Arno ; and they would not break or shatter it, seeing that in their ancient records they found that the said idol of Mars had been consecrated under the ascendancy of such a planet, that if it should be broken or put in a dishonourable place the city would suffer danger and damage and great mutation. And although the Florentines had newly become Christians, they still retained many customs of Paganism, and retained them for a long time ; and they greatly feared their ancient idol of Mars ; so little perfect were they yet in the Holy Faith.’ ”

“ Where is this tower, then ? ”

“ The destroying Goths tumbled it into the Arno. Charlemagne is said to have rescued and restored the mutilated fragment. Again hear our ancient historian :

“ ‘ ’Tis said that the ancients held the opinion that there was no power to re-build the city, if that marble image, consecrated by necromancy to Mars by the first Pagan builders, was not first found again and drawn out of the Arno, in which it had been from the destruction of Florence down to that time. And, when found, they set it upon a pillar on the bank of the said river, where is now the head of the Ponte Vecchio. This we neither affirm nor believe, inasmuch as it appeareth to us to be the opinion of augurers and pagans, and not reasonable but great folly to hold that a statue so made could work thus ; but commonly it was said by the ancients that if it were changed, our city would needs suffer great mutation.’ ”

“ Dante refers to it as ‘ the mutilated stone that guards the bridge.’ Tribute was paid to it. Paganism dies hard, if it ever dies, and fearful were the penalties threatened to all who ill-used it, or refused to treat it with reverence. In 1333 bridge and statue were swept away by a destroying flood, and

the stones of Mars mingled finally with the common stones that lie in the river bed."

"I would have preserved it," said the Colonel. "Not for superstition, but for soldiery. And you?——"

"Paganism is not to me what it is to the conventional idea. Mars meant, not a worship of stone, so much as a representation of the Cult of Courage. These gods were surely symbols of virtues and their vices. Wipe out the word 'god' and put 'Angel of Courage under God.' The heroes became gods, as our saints become a heavenly hierarchy. It is a matter of times and terms, and God understands us all, as we shall never understand ourselves until He shall speak again and enlighten us to the reading of His mysteries—for which learning He has not yet supplied us with much more than an alphabet."

"I am glad to hear a man of religion speaking thus," said the Colonel. "I have had little time for thinking."

Spending the days in pursuing the history of men with the contemporary inspirations and movements of the Arts all along the line, the three friends would sit on their balcony in the evenings looking over the river and the distant spires and towers that illustrated the text of the notes they had in mind. In these hours they made closer acquaintance with each other as individuals, and traits of character, opinions, and variously-coloured impressions were recognized, compared, tolerated and admired. The old *padre* from his standpoint of age and local experience enjoyed to draw forth the mind-notes of a younger man, the native of colder climes, and far different in education and training, while both elders leaned backward with delight to meet on common ground, as in a meadow in spring, among the sweet young grasses and flowers of a child's faith and imagination.

Naturally the name of Arno was often mentioned by the *padre*, for he loved the boy, and admitted that he himself had been drawn to his new friends now present chiefly by the fact that they belonged to the circle into which the lad had been

received. He rejoiced to think that Arno was getting a good English education, and hoped that through the kindness and practical good sense of Mr. Montgomery he would escape the fate of his father, a disappointed man, and would play his part in the world as a useful member of society, contented with the part that had been allotted to him.

“It was his poor father’s hope,” said the *padre*. “He was fond of confiding to me his regrets for having wasted his years on straining after ideals which for him could never be realized. ‘I have all my life,’ he said, ‘been sowing seeds which could bear no fruit. When the young green shoots came up I thought I saw my harvest. The little buds and blossoms were beautiful, but when the autumn came there was nothing but the first foliage grown old, with a touch of rusty gold on the leaf where ought to have been a plum or a pomegranate.’”

“I said, ‘You have some of the thoughts of a poet. Might you not have been successful if you had expressed yourself in another way?’”

“‘Oh,’ he said, ‘I tried that way too. I am one of those who have a bit of everything and enough of nothing. Inebriated with joy in the sense of pictorial colour I lack the severe touch necessary in form. It was the same on every side. What I possessed with my pencil I lacked with my pen, and *vice-versa*. The union of many threads that makes the knot of success was not to be woven out of the broken filaments of talents that seemed to have been given me in bountiful measure.’”

“I tried to console him by saying that every striving soul had a success before God, which might not appear to human eyes, not even to his own.”

Here the Colonel, thinking of his own shortened career, bowed his head.

“Do I tire you?” asked the *padre* eagerly, not perceiving the immediate point of his words.

“No; pray proceed. I am interested in this poor Warrender.”

“I said, ‘Such souls give back the increase to God, along

with the humility that sees it as nothing, and the desire that it were a worthier offering. And God, who does not want every jewel of the same colour, or cut with the same number of facets—He gathers all into His treasury.’”

There was silence on the balcony for a few moments, while the moon rose from among the spires and towers, and made a heaven of growing splendour, ever widening and spreading till it embraced and crowned the entire city, at first creating black shadows in the depths of the river, but only to scatter them triumphantly before the flood of its own silver glory.

At last the Colonel said :

“The man you lifted up and comforted is now at peace. The boy remains among us, here. Do you know what the father really wished, apart from his own despondency, for his son?”

“He used to say, even in his brightest moments, ‘I hope that Arno will take to a steady business career. You have no idea of how often a failing idealist will turn to admire the ruder men of common action who have never been bewitched and bewildered by dreams and hopes which to themselves have been as the *mirage* in the desert.’

“I used to say to him, ‘Why do you expect that the boy may be unlike yourself in tastes and dispositions?’

“He said, ‘I had ancestors who were plain burghers, men of worldly enterprise and business faculties. Why should not Arno, under fitting circumstances, develop a character derived from them, rather than from one so erratic and weak as I am, a mere sport from, perhaps, some mediaeval forefather? And then, his mother!’ poor Warrender would cry. ‘Think of the courage, the fortitude of the woman who devoted her strength and sacrificed her vigorous life for me! The woman who was despised by my people as only a peasant! May it not be that her fortitude will be in him, to help him out of the slough, if he should fall into it?’”

Sara raised an eager face, with two shining eyes, and struck her little palms together.

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“There he failed!” she cried. “Why did he speak of a slough after what you had said to him? Why should his mother’s fortitude support him in one path more than another?”

The men were startled. As is often the case, the elders and wise-heads had not reckoned on the child-mind that runs on before with its sunlit conclusions while they think it is only following along their own track of experience where so many shadows cross the path of their illumination.

“Why, indeed, Signorina mia,” said the *padre*. “Only Providence knows what is in store for Arno. The fine brain of the father and the strong arm of the mother are alike resolved, now, into the purpose of God. To Him we are fitted to leave everything that we call the future, even when we are fitted for nothing else. We weave in His looms with the threads He has given us, but we are mostly weaving in the dark. One selects what he takes to be threads of gold, and purple, and scarlet double-dyed, but when the web is woven and held to the light the lustre has disappeared and the cloth is grey and dun. Another has received colourless material for his share, and when all is finished, lo! the tapestry shines like the sun and the moon and the stars, and has the hues of the sunrise and the sunset!”

Chapter VII

“Not an Art, but a Craft”

FOR some months the little party remained in Florence, studying its history in books and stones, and in tradition, living in the overthrow of Paganism by Christianity, and the struggle when the heathen strove to return upon Christendom. They followed the wars of corruption with reform, and of reform with pride, the progress of Art carrying the torch of faith through mire and wreckage, carving truth into marble, and giving it the colour of life on canvas. The crowded record of a city that was a nation was conned, from Cæsar, the Conqueror, to Lorenzo, the Magnificent, from the prudent and beneficent Matilda to Simonetta the beautiful and frail, through the storms and glories of the Republic, and to its fall.

The poets and painters were known, not only in their works, but their characters, and lived with as men. Andrea del Sarto, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, were here worshipped as sons of genius, shining by their own light, rather than as illumined by the lamps held aloft of alien biographers. Poets were accepted as human beings, and embraced as living fellow-creatures who had walked this earth, though gifted with the wings of the gods.

As spring advanced the friends moved away to the outskirts of the city, stopping at Fiesole, and other lovely stages of travel, and domesticating themselves for some time in the *padre's* little house in the Casentino. The tiny dwelling, scarcely big enough to take them all in, was set among the

teeming spring flowers which flowed round it like the foam of a river, up its walls and almost over its roof. The songs of the nightingales haunted the little interior, the boundaries of the garden were scarcely to be discerned where all the surrounding land was as one garden. Arno's little bare brown room fell to Sara's share, with two small windows framing the exquisite landscape, and a figure in wood of Saint Francis withdrawing from the sunlight in a corner.

Sara was keenly interested at finding herself in possession of this nook where Arno had lived. The atmosphere of the place charmed and soothed like the unaccountable sweetness of things in a dream. The *padre*, who was rejoiced by her delight in his simple abode, showed her all his little treasures, and allowed her to ask innumerable questions. The figure of Saint Francis, he told her, had been copied from the statue by Donatello at Padua. Then followed the legends and stories of the saint, of his tenderness for his sisters, the birds, and his brother, the wolf, till the world was again transformed for Sara, and a fresh dream took the place of the glories and splendours, the pageants, and the martial clangour of the Florentine centuries. Then, why not on to Assisi? The wanderings of travel might as well take them to the scenes of which this lean brown man with his spiritual face and hands was the hero.

All places were the same to the Colonel in this bewildering country, where life was so different from everything of his former experience; and whither his little daughter chose to lead, there would he follow. Early summer saw them housed among the olives and vineyards near to Assisi, in a valley bespread with the gold and white and blue of wild flowers, near enough in their retreat among cornfields, fruit trees, and gardens to the mysterious village with its central sanctuary. Here, in the shadows of the Portiuncula, Sara found another startlingly beautiful Saint Francis (the work of della Robbia), the spare spiritual man whose legend had captivated her imagination. The Colonel respected her enthusiasm, but wanted to know what battles he had fought, what useful work

he had done in the world, and, missing something, the soldier's mind went back to Julius Cæsar and Cosmo dei Medici, and even to Donatello and della Robbia, who had enshrined this ideal, one in the clay of the earth, the other in the wood of a tree.

The *padre* strove to read for the Colonel the riddle that puzzled him, to explain a mind that moved on lines different from his own with regard to duty and helpfulness. But Sara, listening, began to make riddles of her own, which were even more difficult of solution.

In the evenings they would sit among the flowers watching the sunset glowing upon St. Mary of the Angels, the veils of violet and grey gathering on the ethereal hills, and deepening the solemnity of the valley. And then they would exchange their thoughts, the result of their day among the walls of Assisi.

"*Padre*," said Sara, "I want you to explain something to me. You love Saint Francis. Everyone who understands him loves and admires him for his poverty. The beautiful legend tells that he wedded the Lady Poverty. It was his power in the world."

"No, no," said the Colonel. "I think it was his hindrance. Had he used his brain force, allied with money, what noble things he could have achieved and left behind him, instead of a mere sentiment hanging over beautiful buildings erected by others, and exquisite scenery which he found here when he came, and left as he found,—as we find it."

Sara cast a deprecating look at her father, but he went on.

"The birds he preached to, the wolf he tamed, if he did these things, were not permanently influenced. They are just as God created them, following each their own instincts. Now, Sara, I have said my say. I see you have more questions in your little head to bother the *padre*."

"May I?" said Sara, looking at the old man who was watching her. He nodded kindly.

"You admire his spirit of poverty. You have—chosen it

yourself,” said Sara, suddenly blushing at what might seem indelicacy in her last words.

The *padre* also blushed, a faint colour rising on his sallow furrowed face.

“God chose it for me, signorina,” he said. “I had never the opportunity of being rich.”

“Ah, but you chose more than God gave,” said Sara, remembering the blessings of beggars, the stories of his house-keeper, who deplored her old master’s self-denials. “And then, and then—if it is blessed to be poor, why do you want Arno to be rich?”

“Did I say so?” said the *padre*.

“Tut, tut, Sara!” said the Colonel. “I fear this land of dreams is affecting your natural good sense.”

“Arno’s father, and you, father, agree in hoping that he will devote his life to linen-weaving in Mr. Montgomery’s mills, and not to art, because it will make plenty of money for him. And the *padre* hopes the same.”

“Not altogether for money-making,” said the Colonel, “but for usefulness in the world, where trade and manufacture are a power so colossal.”

Sara kept gazing at the *padre*, who was silent, and looked a little embarrassed.

“There are two ways,” he said. “Arno has not consulted me as to which is the better. My own way I can thrust on no one. The boy, thanks to friends, will have his choice. I hope that whatever may be the gifts entrusted to him he will expend his treasure nobly to God and humanity.”

“That we can all agree to,” said the Colonel cheerfully.

Sara pondered long over these questions, which to her young, uncompromising mind, were not satisfactorily answered. What was this ideal virtue of poverty? What this ideal glory of Art? Why was there such a glamour hanging around that starved brown man in the shadows of the Portiuncula; how had his image in clay come to be the masterpiece of genius to remain for the admiration of the ages? And why were

Donatello and della Robbia, who interpreted him, remembered when the mere money-makers of their day are forgotten? And if poverty and art carried the highest standards in the world, why did Arno's friends fear them as leading to pitfalls?

Instinctively she desisted from pressing her questions, relegating them to the mystery chamber that exists in the minds of all thoughtful children; a chamber on which the key is turned, until, perhaps at an unexpected moment later in life, the door is thrown open, and the light enters, expelling a gruesome phantom, or revealing some truth in its beauty.

All summer they moved from one city or village to another in the lovely Tuscan plains, and on the heights, and in winter they returned to Florence, and to regular study for Sara, to carry on the rather erratic course of her education. Proud of her artistic talents, her father gave her every opportunity of cultivating them, and her teachers made their lessons attractive with work in the galleries, with an angel's head filched from the corner of a Botticelli, a shepherd strayed out of some pastoral Nativity, a bit of hill and sky stolen from a landscape of Perugino.

Meanwhile, the Colonel was growing rather weary of Art and Tuscan history. He bore his ennui like a soldier, and made the best of his present camp quarters; but though he made many acquaintances among the travellers who came and went at the hotels, and the *padre* paid him frequent visits, the concealment of his boredom was becoming a difficulty with him.

Accident suddenly came to his relief by providing him with an occupation, and an altogether new source of interest. Something having gone wrong with the mechanism of the chair-on-wheels on which he moved about, he amused himself with an examination of the works that had failed.

"I was a Royal Engineer," he said to the *padre*, who found him busy with a set of new tools. "I am a bit of a mechanic, and of an inventive turn. It has come to me like a vision of a new life, the thought that I may yet conquer with my hands

something to which my departed legs would never have led me.”

There was a new interest, a fresh excitement for Sara in the discovery that her father was an inventive genius as well as a beneficent parent and a delightful companion. She watched with breathless amazement the development of his original design for a new style of chair-car which he intended to bring to a state of hitherto unheard-of perfection. Here was a new kind of art of which she had known nothing, though the world all round her was moving by its handiwork.

“Not an Art,” said the Colonel, “but a craft. A positive motive power to assist in propelling the world. A means by which a disabled man may provide feet for himself, if he cannot devise wings. No electricity, nothing for which he requires other aid than his own. Just a few harmless arrangements in steel, and his own hand to steer him.”

If anyone had attempted to persuade the Colonel that a motor was the thing he wanted, a thing that had already run far ahead of all possible attempts on the lines he prescribed for himself, he would at that moment have felt hurt, vexed, snubbed, and unconvinced. Like any child, he had to gain his conclusions by his own experience. His mind, moving even more quickly than his car wheels, would arrive one day at places of which he did not dream.

Meanwhile he rejoiced, congratulating himself on still having a purpose in the world.

“Not altogether laid on the shelf, eh?” he said to the *padre*, who stood lost in admiration while a mystery of wheels within wheels was explained to him.

It pleased him immensely to call himself a craftsman, and he would pose the *padre* with questions as to where his place would have been in the Guilds of the Commonwealth of Florence, whether his craft would rank with the Greater or with the Lesser Arts.

After some time he found that he failed of the help of a working mechanic to put his invention to a practical test,

and he could no longer conceal his anxiety to return to a land of trade-progress and hard-headed business. What with his own imperfect power of expression in the Italian language and his contempt for the inferiority, as he regarded it, of the modern, contrasted with the ancient Florentine whose hand had been at the building up of a city that was a nation, the Colonel did not feel able to work out his new ideas under the sun of Tuscany.

He acknowledged that his natural desire to return home had been kept in check by a little shrinking from presenting himself to his old friends in his maimed condition. Now he felt ashamed of a cowardice that was unworthy of a soldier, and was aware that power to overcome had been accorded to him through new comrades, the dream in his mind, and the occupation for his fingers.

He thought over the matter for a considerable time before speaking of it to Sara, fearing to disappoint her, seeing how thoroughly she was enjoying and profiting by her present way of life. But Sara's quick sympathies ran before his resolution, and surprised him one day by meeting him full in the face with a question.

"Now, Daddy, don't you think you could get on better with this work of yours if you were at home in your own house, and could have your own workshop and any amount of blacksmiths, or whatever they are, who wouldn't want you to talk Italian to them?"

"I don't know but that I should, little girl," said the Colonel.

He had feared to disappoint her, but meanwhile she had divined his reluctance to present himself in his present state among the friends of his strong, ambitious youth. Dreading to give him pain, she would not have pressed him to take her home. Now, however, it was found that the wishes of father and daughter had been tending in the same direction, and the matter was decided at once.

As the train moved away, taking them from Florence, all

the full life of the last three years seemed to gather round the spare figure of the old *padre*, who gazed after them with his solemn eyes as Sara waved her hand to him from the carriage window.

The Colonel had planned a series of visits to some of the manufacturing towns of England, and these were made before he set his face towards his native town. His mind was running on machinery and possible inventions to ease labour without lessening the necessity for working hands.

“You see,” he explained to Sara, “I have observed that all the latter-day inventions aim at enabling one or more men to do the work of ten or more men. Thus fortunes are the more easily made by the capitalists, while the ranks of the unemployed are swelled. My ambition would be to deplete the cruel millions and to increase the number of wage-earners, treating the labourer more as a man and less as a beast of burthen.”

So a few weeks were spent in Lancashire, where Sara’s sympathetic nature enabled her to enter into her father’s ambition, and thus to help him to carry out his designs.

Chapter VIII

Bleachgreens

A DINNER party of friends was assembled to welcome Colonel Stevenson back to his native town. The table was lined with faces young and old. Beside the hostess sat the Colonel in a new, improved chair, in which he had glided with ease from the drawing-room to the dining-room. Mrs. Fontaine's uncompromising but benevolent countenance shone next the host, and at her other side was Sir Jonah Cunnygham, a wealthy banker, and old friend of all the elders of the little circle. Next came Herminia, whom Sara scarcely recognized in the handsome young woman with the very blonde hair and eyelashes, who was rather overdressed for such a party. Mark and Hugh, two well-grown youths, had put themselves on either side of Sara, and Arno was seated opposite. One face at the table Sara noticed as quite new to her, a young man placed beside Herminia, who was paying a good deal of attention to Jane's now grown-up eldest daughter.

"That is Harvey Durrant," said Mark, "Sir Jonah's protégé. He has come to be with father in the mills. Isn't he a handsome chap? And there's no end of fun in him."

Sara regarded him with interest. He was indeed handsome, with a gay smile and debonair manner undeniably charming. From him she glanced towards the pale face of Arno, whose earnest eyes were fixed on hers. He had grown so tall and manly that she felt almost obliged to take him as a stranger. But doubtless she herself was altered also, as he must perceive.

"Oh, yes; he's a big fellow now," said Hugh. "We're all bigger than we were, you know. Three years are a lot of one's life. No, he's not much of a talker."

"He looks as if he could talk a good deal if anyone would give him an opportunity," said Sara.

"He does get left out somehow," said Hugh, "but it's his own fault. Why isn't he jolly, like Harvey?"

Juliet and Olive were seated by Arno, but all their eyes and ears were for Sara and their brothers over the way, and Harvey and Herminia on a line with them. Though two years older than Sara, they would have been guessed as younger, being small and slight in build, and dressed like children.

"She oughtn't to have got past us like that," said Olive, talking across Arno to her sister. "She'll soon look as old as Herminia, and mother doesn't want us to grow up in a hurry."

"It's because her hair is so dark," said Juliet, "and in those heavy plaits. Then she carries her head high; and her skirts are down to her ankles!"

They both gazed with all their blue eyes at the object of their criticism. Sara wore a white frock, and the heavy braids of her hair were tied with black ribbons.

"What do you think, Arno? Isn't she old?" asked Juliet. "We're seventeen, and she's only fifteen."

"I'm seventeen myself, and I feel as if I had lived a thousand years," said Arno.

"Oh, you griffin!" said Olive, "but a girl couldn't feel like that."

"Whatever she feels, she looks like an old Italian picture," said Arno.

"So she does," said Harvey, overhearing the last remark.

"Do all Italian pictures look like that?" asked Herminia, raising her blonde eyebrows.

"Not all," said Harvey, "but as you were saying——"

And Herminia returned to the subject of golf.

Robert Montgomery sat at the head of his table, brimful of

hospitality. A plain-featured man, though not ugly, he had the expression of face that suggests a faithful and aggressive dog, whose bark is worse than its bite, as the saying is. Even in happy moments his smile was always a little held in check by a certain hint of frown, though his laugh might be loud. Over the river yonder in his office at the mills his clerks could tell that he was often loud, but not with laughter. Stormy in his business hours, his worst humours at home were shown by an ominous silence, which warned people to move without noise, and he was annoyed by the click of a needle or the falling of a cinder. At his dinner table, as now, with his friends around him, he was at his best.

Mrs. Fontaine, who always began her hour of intercourse with him by "telling him a piece of her mind" about some of his works, had already done her duty in this respect, and was now eloquent in admiring the wonderful resurrection of Colonel Stevenson.

"But what will he do with himself in that big house, full of shadows and memories, with no companion but that little girl of his? Could we not find him something to do? I might gather up materials for him to write a book on the lack of labour and the case of the unemployed. I don't think he will visit about much, brave as he is; and I must say brave is the word for him."

The old lady had lowered her voice while discussing the guest of the evening, but Sir Jonah Cunnygham had caught a word or two, and said aloud:

"I was saying to our friend just now that he ought to leave the town and take a place in the country. Nothing for a man like him, or for any man, so good as grounds of his own; gardens, pheasants, orchids,—things of that kind to make an interest for him. And little Miss Sara here would know how to help him to enjoy it."

Sara looked at her father.

"Spoken like a rich man!" said the Colonel, laughing.

Sir Jonah, whose great house and park were one of the sights

of the neighbourhood of Belfast, threw up his hands and eyes deprecatingly.

"Such things are not for the soldier of fortune," said the Colonel, cracking his walnuts, "and I may almost say I am glad they are not."

"Sour grapes!" murmured Harvey Durrant to Herminia.

"You see, I have a liking for my old home——"

"Right, my dear fellow, but you will allow that the street you live in is not quite what it was!" said Sir Jonah.

"I like it all the better. Is a soldier not to have an interest in the democracy? Is the rank and file of mankind to affect him only as so many marks to be shot at? I like that encroachment of a few worthy shops, which, however, leave me a wide vantage ground, and flatter me by acknowledging the superiority of my age and my style, and by striving to approach me with an excellent individual style of their own. I would rather see from my study windows the lights of those shops springing up in the dusk, and hear the busy patter which they bring to the place, than look out on the lonely trees of some suburban enclosure as unlike Willows' Burn as can be imagined."

Sir Jonah merely wagged his head in reply. He was aware of the superiority of Willows' Burn over any country residence in the neighbourhood of the town, and of the importance of his position as owner of the oldest and most conservative bank in the county. That any man, whether his equal by birth and personal distinction or not, should hint a comparison with him as regarded financial status appeared to him a failure in discretion. Persons of lesser fortune ought to cultivate some little modesty, instead of alluding to it with a brazen cheerfulness which claimed for it the character of, at least, an advantage, if not a virtue.

Jane Montgomery smiled approval, first on Sir Jonah, and then on the Colonel. The success of wealth was on one side of her, and, on the other, the personal distinction which assumed the right to do with honour what the vulgar would

shrink from ; and the presence of such flattered her would-be-hospitable instincts. At the head of her table, in her best velvet robe and diamonds, Jane was in her most amiable mood, and, in a sub-conscious way, she believed herself to be the cause of the well-being of all the individuals around her, of Sir Jonah's prosperity, Colonel Stevenson's wonderful recovery and cheerful courage, Sara's good fortune in having such a father, Herminia's beauty, and the fair promise of her younger daughters, the desirable position of Harvey Durrant in her family, never to speak of the good fortune and prospects of her energetic husband and intelligent sons. Arno was the only person at the table whose presence there gave her no satisfaction, and she claimed to herself no share in introducing so dull a youth into her circle. Yet she felt that the bounty extended to him was also due to her, since she permitted his easy footing in her house, and inasmuch as she snubbed him only about once or twice in a fortnight.

Later in the evening, when the elder men talked in the dining-room, Jane fell asleep in a luxurious chair in the drawing-room, Harvey and Herminia turned over music at the piano, and the younger boys and girls clustered together and made rapid progress in renewing and improving their old acquaintance.

The Colonel, Sara, and Sir Jonah Cunnygham had been invited to stay the night and spend the coming week at Bleachgreens, which, as Sara well remembered, was a pleasant place in the sweet spring weather. Meanwhile Sara was made the heroine of the evening by the other young ones, and her cries of "don't you remember?" and "we used to do so and so" were greeted with bursts of laughter and eager rejoinders from her companions.

Mrs. Fontaine had departed early. There was something in the atmosphere of Jane Montgomery's neighbourhood that did not agree with her.

Chapter IX

Montgomery's Mills

SIR JONAH CUNNYGHAM was a strong hardy old man, suspicious in temper and cynical in his view of things and persons. A bachelor without relatives, he lived alone with his servants in his fine place of Willows' Burn, and enjoyed his riches and the power they gave him in his own odd way. No one had ever come so near him as Harvey Durrant, of whose grandparents he had known something, and towards whom he had shown an amazing liberality. It was matter of wonder to their friends that Harvey, with all his charm and boldness, had been able to push himself into the good graces of the old gentleman, who had placed him in Mr. Montgomery's office, where his promotion was to depend on his industry and good conduct, and the development of his talent for the business. Meanwhile Sir Jonah made him a sufficient allowance, and occasionally invited him to dine and sleep at Willows' Burn. Friends, looking on, had made up their minds that Durrant would, ultimately, be Sir Jonah's heir; but Harvey himself knew that he had reason to feel unsure of such good fortune. He valued highly, however, the prestige resulting from expectations that might never be realized, had an infinite belief in his personal power to turn the wheel of fortune, and had schemes of his own for conquering the world. He had also his peculiar methods of supplementing the stipend allowed him by his patron, whom he treated with an amount of deference which some-

times provoked the secret contempt of the cynical old man. He and Arno Warrender each had his own room in the office buildings in the Mill-yard close to the Mills, and, only when invited, crossed the ornamental bridge that spanned the river between Bleachgreens and the factory settlement. Harvey's were the best apartments in the place, and luxuriously furnished, Arno's were small and frugally appointed. As the only occupants of the building at night, except the watchman in the office below, the young men sometimes spent an evening together, improving an acquaintance into which circumstances had led them. Arno looked up to Harvey as a man three years older than himself, and many years wiser in the ways of the world, while he admired his handsome physique, and was warmed by the geniality of his manner. Durrant, on the other hand, liked the company of the quiet thoughtful lad whose unobtrusiveness made a foil to his own brilliance, whose admiration was so genuine, and whose distaste for the business of the factory rendered it unlikely that he could ever rival him in the good graces of Robert Montgomery.

If a visit of inspection had been paid to the rooms occupied by the two youths respectively, with a view to ascertaining the tastes of each, it would have been found that Harvey's delight was in the speculations of sport, witness the piles of papers concerned with betting on horses, and the large correspondence dealing with foreign lotteries, letters neatly tied up and put out of sight in the pigeon-holes of his bureau. Harvey had been successful already in a few ventures, and thoroughly believed in the luck which supplied him with more pocket-money than Sir Jonah believed him to have any need of. In Arno's small bare room there was a large cupboard in which were stored away a scanty supply of artists' materials, a folding easel, and a few books on Art, possessions acquired with difficulty by savings from the small stipend received for his services in the office. During the evening hour which the two would often spend together, Harvey was the speaker, airing his own views

of life and instructing his companion, whose ideals he despised but whose reticence he trusted. To gain money, somehow or other, and to enjoy everything in the world that money could buy was his philosophy, and Arno's reserve in hearing it expounded, and occasional blunt denials and denunciations of its principles, only confirmed Harvey in his belief that the lad, whose unconscious flattery pleased him so greatly, was a dreaming fool, who would never rise above his position of a poor little cog-wheel in a big machinery, and whose opinions on any subject were of no more than infinitesimal consequence.

On the day after the meeting of friends at Bleachgreens the visitors were invited to inspect the factory in working hours, and a suggestion made in the most charming manner by Durrant that the little party should have tea in his rooms was hailed as an attractive novelty by the young people. Only at the moment of setting out was it remembered that Colonel Stevenson was unable to climb staircases or thread the narrow passages skirting dangerous machinery.

"Never mind," he said, "I shall visit all the places on the level of *terra firma* and find enough there, no doubt, to interest me. Sara will tell me about the rest at our leisure."

To Sara the visit was altogether delightful. The making of anything, the ways and the possibilities of creation, had always fascinated her imagination, and the efforts, and the fates of the workers themselves, the creatures of a mysterious and all-powerful Creator, grew larger and more important in her vision as their works were brought nearer to her observation and understanding. The noisy engines, the whirling wheels, the swift-flying shuttles, the groups and rows of strong patient faces intent on toil amidst steam and exhausting heat, the rage of industry consuming life to keep all alive, impressed her to a silence in which everything was noted, and on which many questions were imprinted for future enlightenment. Her father's desire to invent something that would at once ease labour and increase the number of labourers who exist by the hard-earned wage, went with her through all the dizzy rooms and passages.

Robert Montgomery led the inspecting band with enthusiasm, proud of his trade in the abstract, and of his power and possessions, visible and audible at the moment.

"This party is all for you, Sara," he said, "and you have not a word. Have you lost your interest in us and our works? I remember taking you, when a little tot, around the mills, and you clapped your hands with delight, and had plenty to say to us."

"I am thinking more than I am saying, Uncle Robert," said Sara. "I am taking it all in for father, you know. I shall have plenty to say to you about it by and bye."

Mr. Montgomery looked at her with puzzled eyes, and laughed. He was accustomed to the exclamations of surprise and admiration, the little cries of nervous fear and delight at novel and wonderful sights, of the ladies who visited his factory. This girl of fifteen, who was still a mere child in his eyes, seemed to him to be taking on the airs of a thinking person. Willing to prove her powers of serious observation, he began to pay her the same amount of attention, in explanation of the system and its working, as he would have bestowed on an intelligent boy or an enquiring fellow-man. Sara listened with increasing pleasure, and her keen questions and apt replies drew forth more and more information from the master of the mills.

"Pity you are not a boy," he said at last; "there is a lot of workable understanding, an apprehension of mechanical constructive power behind that smooth symmetrical brow of yours. Where did you get it, my lassie?"

"Father is interested in these things," said Sara. "Uncle Robert, do explain to me the system of that curious conglomeration of wheels and belts, all going mad to produce something or other that I cannot see the end of!"

Then followed a lecture continued from room to room in every department of the works, Sara showing her satisfaction in her animated countenance, and by her pertinent observations.

"I am sorry you can't exchange minds with Arno Warrender," said Robert. "You would not waste your opportunities as he is doing."

"Does he waste them?"

"I do not mean to say that he is an idler or a scamp. He sticks to his desk, and goes through the routine of his work as it is placed before him. But it is evident that he has no enthusiasm for trade. If he could only model himself a little on Harvey Durrant! There is a young man who can see all the noble points, all the issues beneficial to mankind, of manufacture and commerce!"

"Is Mr. Durrant so much more useful to you than Arno?" asked Sara.

Robert reflected.

"I do not insist that he is more useful at the present moment," he said, annoyed at having his judgments questioned, but resolved to be accounted reasonable. "He is useful enough in his present place. But when the large views of business are put before him he is dreamy and abstracted, and he cannot be roused to ambition of mercantile distinction in the future. Talk to him, and talk to Harvey, and to my son Hugh, and you will soon understand what I mean. He needs to be roused to an appreciation of the importance of the career I have designed for him. For his father's sake I should like to see him attain distinction and make his fortune."

Many thoughts concerning Arno rushed into Sara's mind.

"You were rather a friend of Arno's when he came to us first," said Robert. "Can you not speak to him of these matters, influence him to look on them as you, who are only a girl, not called on to play a part in the struggle for success in the world, are able to see and apprehend them?"

Sara looked straight at the good merchant's masterful face so full of generous intention, so unaware of other forces, contrary to, and yet in harmony with, those which were urgent in himself, and her interest in Arno's difficulties was refreshed and intensified. Standing there among the whirling wheels she got her first strong impression of the diversity and complexity of characters in the gifts of fate, and in the irresistible calls of the Spirit that bloweth where it listeth.

"I will try," said Sara.

"Do so," said Mr. Montgomery. "My boys, who are so much more sensible, are inclined to make a butt of him. Harvey is good-natured, but finds him a dull companion. My little girls have no kind of taste for the things which interest you. It would be good for the lad if you would be something of a sister to him."

"I will try," repeated Sara as they stepped forth on an outer staircase.

They had lingered behind, the rest of the party having pressed on, led by Harvey, who was a lively and eloquent guide, excelling even the mill-owner's sons, if not in knowledge of the works, at all events in facility for exploiting their meanings and purposes. When her visitation and her lesson were over, Sara found her father sitting in his chair in the outer mill-yard gazing at the exterior of the buildings, and from time to time making notes of answers to questions put by him to employés whom he stopped in their comings and goings, in and out and about the yards and offices. Above the great humming mills behind him rose the tall chimney tapering in the sky, dangerous in storms, looking like the dumb belfry of some old-world cathedral robbed of the bells that had summoned a city to prayer. At the opposite side of the yard was the manager's long, low-roofed house, with a baby's curly head at an open window, a flight of pigeons settling on the eaves, and more of them pranking their feathers on the window-sills. Beyond and above rose the green lawns and trees of Bleachgreens, crowning the river that flowed between the mill-owner's home and his factory settlement. The interior space of the mill-yard was crowded with square solid blocks of yarn, hanks, knotted and packed into grey hard cubes and piled on top of each other in great irregular masses, awaiting the loading of the carts that were to take them to their market. How Sara remembered visits to this yard, and the adventure of climbing the blocks of yarn, finding hiding places in hollows where the packing was irregular, as birds find holes in the

mountain's face and clefts in rocks. How delightful it was, beyond all experience of Alpine exploring, to sit in a little house built of the warm wholesome-smelling yarn squares, nothing overhead but the blue of heaven and a singing lark, and to hear cries of wonder in the yard below, the Montgomery nurse in search of her wild flock, calling and vowing "never will I bring these children to this yard again"; which she did, however, many a time, having friends of her own in and about the workers' settlement.

Of these things Sara chatted to her father, and moving to the yard-gates pointed up-hill to the yarn-walk, where the girls with their coloured bodices and bare white arms pulled the long grey strands, straining them as they dried, and getting them into shape for the hanks. Beyond all that were the carpenter's "shop" and the thundering "beetles" and the winding walk with white gates and stiles, a high green hill on one side, a running hedge-rivulet on the other flanked by a wall of wild rose, and banked with primroses and violets, a walk leading finally to such a country road as, the children know, wanders away in the direction of everywhere, and ends nowhere.

"It is all so familiar to me, Daddy dear," said Sara. "I was so happy here long ago. I want to take you to so many places. There is the corn-mill at the end of the avenue, where the smell of the hot corn coming down the hopper was so good on a cold day. How the hens used to revel in the grain that lay thick about the door! And I want to see dear old Peter, who used to take us little children in his arms and swing us about till we were dizzy. He was an old man then; I hope he is there still," said Sara, suddenly alarmed.

"How long ago is it, Sara? A man might live longer than your memory," said the Colonel.

"I am fifteen. I can go back quite twelve years," said Sara with dignity.

"But it is only three since my little girl came to me," said the Colonel.

Chapter X

“The Will holds a Whip as well as a Key”

HARVEY DURRANT'S tea was a success. Hot cakes were sent by the manager's wife across the yard, strawberries and flowers from over the river, honey in the comb from a little farmhouse, away beyond the white gates and the green hill on the road to everywhere.

The three younger girls and the three youths were the bidden guests. Herminia, as a grown-up person, was not expected to be of the party, but just as the spirit-lamp had set the kettle boiling she appeared, daintily dressed in faint blue, her blonde hair crowned with a hat made of pale roses. Harvey, who had intended to be master of his own ceremonies and to dispense his own hospitalities, immediately invited her to make the tea, and the younger girls felt with disappointment that a children's entertainment had suddenly developed grown-up features which threatened to spoil the fun. Herminia would take care to absorb all Harvey's attention, and but little of his lively talk would fall to the share of Olive and Juliet. The general mirth, however, was irrepressible even by Herminia's perfect toilette and air of importance. The novelty of Sara's presence provided interest for Mark and Hugh, who entertained her with an exhibition of Durrant's various ornamental pipes, and other masculine properties of the prettiest order, all of which added to their admiration of “a fellow”

who had so much of his own way, and who indulged in so many fads which their father would not have tolerated in his sons, but failed to take heed of in the protégé of Sir Jonah Cunnygham.

Sara's eyes moved on from the carved pipes and the photographs of fashionable beauties, and were lifted to the rows of paper-covered books on shelves that were just out of reach of her hand. She stepped on a high stool and took down a volume, not unobserved by Harvey, whose eyes had been often upon her while he waited on Herminia.

“You will not care for that,” he said quickly. “A lot of French trash. A friend sends them to me from Paris, and I just look through them and stow them away up there.”

“Oh!” said Sara. “Haven't you any worth reading among so many books?”

“Of course, I keep my worthy books in another place. But we didn't meet here to read, Miss Sara.”

“What a little prig she is!” said Herminia in a low voice. “Always talking about something that other people don't care about, and which makes her seem superior.”

“No,” said Arno suddenly. He had been standing by, overlooked, his eyes following Sara's movements at the other side of the room where Mark and Hugh were rummaging for the other books alluded to by Durrant, the hidden treasure which the Montgomery boys had never discovered.

“Your opinion was not asked,” said Herminia coldly.

“Arno is right,” said Juliet. “Sara isn't a prig. She only looks different from us with her hair in those long plaits, like an old-fashioned picture.”

“Probably it suits her,” said Herminia. “She could not wear it in any other way.”

“Couldn't she?” said Olive. “You shall see!”

Herminia's sisters were in a state of irritation with the unsympathetic grown-up young lady who had interfered with the sport of the tea-party. Were they always to be “kept in their place” by her, even at a party given them as a treat upon

their own account? Harvey, instead of making himself delightfully amusing to them both, as he knew how to do, had been taken possession of and pressed into a service of elderly flirtation with a woman of twenty-one! Mark and Hugh were devoted to Sara, separating her, also from them, and no one had been left for their enjoyment except Arno, who did not count. When Olive, who was the greater romp, said "you shall see," she meant to have some fun. At a sign, her sister moved with her across the room, and each seized a long heavy plait of Sara's hair as she stood with her face to the book-shelves.

"Now, Sara, we saw it last night. Herminia wants to see it. You're not ashamed of your hair? It isn't a wig."

Sara had been trying to shake them off, but they held her fast by the hair. At the words "it isn't a wig!" she laughed.

"Oh, no, it isn't. I'll wear it any way you like to have it."

"You are younger than we are," said Juliet. "You will have to come down to us. We want you to be a girlie girl, and not a picture on a wall."

"Did you think I was trying to hang myself on the wall?" asked Sara between bursts of laughter.

The twins had speedily untwisted the plaited ropes of hair. Shaking it all out, they spread it on her shoulders, and seizing each an arm, turned her round to face the group at the tea-table.

"I've found some little curls," said Olive, pushing the tresses from Sara's temples and ruffling up the short curly undergrowth which showed a warm reddish tinge through the dark brown that had looked like unmitigated black.

"What about the picture now?" said Harvey. Herminia bit her lip with a vexed stare. She did not want to divide her empire of beauty with any one, even a girl of fifteen. Olive and Juliet clapped their hands and laughed triumphantly. They had got their entertainment after all, and punished Herminia, who was always setting herself up over everybody.

"You must wear it like that. Girls do," said Juliet. "You have no right to be making yourself older than us."

“I’m younger,” said Sara, shaking back her mane.

“We know you are, and we don’t want you looking like our grandmother.”

Arno was standing gazing at Sara. He saw a picture with a background of his own country; soft glories of a cloudless heaven, tender greens and fathomless deeps of blues, the landscape of Titian, the horizon of Perugino. Round her were the wings of Botticelli’s angels. But no one saw any of these extravagant accessories but only Arno.

“It is quite becoming,” said Herminia, recovering herself.

“I have some drawings in my room. May I show them to you?” said Arno, suddenly stepping forward.

Everyone was pleased with the suggestion, and Olive and Juliet followed Sara up a narrow stair to Arno’s room saying, reproachfully, “You never invited us to look at your things, Arno.”

“I never thought you would care to come,” said Arno simply, as he led the way.

Juliet and Olive paused in the doorway.

“Oh, Arno, what a bare little hole! How different from Harvey’s room. You have no taste. Come away, Sara, it isn’t nice.”

Arno did not hear. He had captured Sara, who was full of sympathy with him and his treasures, as he well knew by his old memories and his new observations.

The room was small and uncarpeted, with a worn rug here and there, some pieces of necessary furniture of the plainest description; a few photographs of portraits of the old masters, or of their works, framed on the wall, being the only decorations. A high black press at one side of the small fireplace was the safe containing all Arno’s wealth; and producing a key he made for it.

“All my goods are here!” he said joyously as Sara stood by with eager expectancy in her face.

The press, opened, disclosed deep wide shelves on which were stored two or three portfolios, a drawing board, a small

folded easel, a roll of drawing paper and a roll of canvas, a palette and knife, and a tray of colours and brushes. There was a smell of turpentine.

"Oh, what a messy place!" cried Olive.

"And what a smell!" said Juliet, turning up her little keen nose.

"What have you got in the portfolios, Arno?" asked Sara.

"Daubs and scratches. More mess, more smell," said Arno, looking defiantly at the other girls. "Nothing fit for young ladies."

"I am not a young lady," said Sara. "They often remind me that I am the youngest. Babies like to look at pictures. Go away, old ladies, and let the infant be amused!"

"You won't be amused. Arno's things are not amusing. We have some old nursery-books at home. Come and look at them. The pictures are pretty."

Arno's half-angry, half-mortified looks as he closed the door of his press delighted the mischief-loving twins. But feeling that there was no more fun to be had here, and now, probably, a little in Harvey's chambers, they backed to the door.

"Good-bye!" said Sara, kissing her hand to them. "Go home to your nursery pictures, darlings!"

And they vanished.

"Now, Arno, let me see them all!" cried Sara as the short white skirts went through the open door. "I know you have lovely things in those portfolios."

"How do you know?" said Arno, taking one down reluctantly.

"Because I saw what you did before I went away, when you were quite a little boy, and even then you knew what was good, and what wasn't."

"You are going to see a lot of rubbish," said Arno. "I have no time to study, and can only do things by snatches."

"Rubbish of that kind is lovely," persisted Sara. "I have seen the scribbles and rough sketches of the great masters, and I know people who wouldn't think much of them."

Arno tossed his head and laughed.

“Well, pretend I am a great master,” he said, with a flash of fun lighting up his serious eyes. “And when you feel appalled, keep saying, ‘This is, after all, an eccentricity of genius!’”

Sara nodded. “Open, open!” she urged.

The contents of the portfolios were then discovered and criticised. Sara was not disappointed. She understood the vaguest and scratchiest of the drawings, delighted in guessing what they meant, and hearing Arno’s explanations. The more vivid and perfect sketches delighted her, groups of living people, the men about their work in the yard, the girls pulling the yarn in the yarn walk, the old corn-mill with Peter in the doorway and the greedy cocks and hens fighting for the spilled grain outside the threshold. More ideal drawings, the top of the tall mill chimney against the clouds with a flight of birds wheeling around it, a covey of pigeons on the long thatched eaves of a house, scraps of landscape, river-scape, cloud-scape were even more fascinating.

“How you make everything live!” said Sara. “Nothing I can do has that kind of look.”

“You draw, too?” asked Arno.

“Oh, yes, in my way. I love it. And I have had lessons. But I don’t feel like doing it again after seeing these. You never had lessons?”

Arno shook his head.

“I don’t know how you do it. You get your effect with one line where I make ten. And what an effect! But haven’t you something bigger than all these?”

“Yes; but they are altogether imaginary compositions. I have ideas, you know, but models are impossible. And such as they are I can only work at them by sitting up all night.”

A larger portfolio was produced, and several studies for pictures were revealed. Sara was silent with admiration. She thought of Robert Montgomery’s complaint that Arno’s mind

was not concentrated on his work in the office, nor his enthusiasm centred in trade.

She put her thoughts into words, straight.

"How do you ever do your work at Uncle Robert's ledger?" she asked.

"Oh, I lock up my real mind in this press at six o'clock in the morning. From seven to nine in the evening I am free."

"Can you lock it up? What kind of mind do you take with you to the office?"

"A good honest drudging mind. Our brains are all in compartments. I read that, somewhere, and I believe it. I knew it before I knew that anybody else had found it out. The compartments are all under lock, and the will keeps the key."

"When your imaginative brains once get out, don't they refuse to go in again?" said Sara laughing.

"Oh, the will holds a whip as well as a key."

"How will the struggle end?"

"Well, I hope. My idea is to do my work for Mr. Montgomery, honestly and faithfully, and save all I can out of my allowance from him. As soon as I can venture I will try to make my way back to Italy."

"Will he be disappointed?"

"Perhaps he will, from one point of view. He truly desires to see me a successful man in the line of commerce. Trade stands immeasurably higher in his estimation than Art."

"That is true," said Sara.

"And that is very good, for him. If he had not enthusiasm for his work he could not do it so well. He would not be, as he is, a power in his own particular world. And, so, he does not understand me at all. I know him better than he knows me, and I admire him, and I am grateful to him. I have lived by his bread, and I am gathering strength for my own future through his patronage and kindness. I shall have to disappoint him by and bye, for a little while. Afterwards he shall be proud of me."

Sara thought of the old man of the Casentino who loved Arno and would also be proud of his success in any worthy line of life.

“The *padre*——” she began.

“Oh, he thinks like Mr. Montgomery. He believes that as my father was not a successful painter I am bound to be a failure. But a man is seldom the exact reproduction of his father. And I have other blood in my veins. My mother’s people were Tuscans, with ideal traditions, and they were strong Florentines at sturdy periods. It is in me to work with two hands till the moment comes when I can put both on the turning of one wheel.”

“I am glad to find you so strong,” said Sara with sparkling eyes. She had heard much about the weakness of Arno’s father, and the likelihood of the son proving also a weakling. She had not known the full extent of her pitying sympathy for the boy who had so many probabilities against him.

Arno coloured a little. He felt for a moment like being patronized by a girl. Sara, by intuition, saw her mistake, and tried to blot it out.

“The *padre* will be proud, too,” she said quickly. “He is an ideal Tuscan, and a wise old man besides. We have had no opportunity of talking about him yet. Father wants to talk to you about him. You will come to see us when we are at home, won’t you?”

Arno’s face lighted up. “Indeed I will,” he said, “if I can get permission. And you will show me your drawings?”

“If you promise to denounce them as they deserve,” said Sara.

Chapter XI

“ You would die rather than split ”

ARNO had poured out to Sara much more of his hopes and desires than can be put on record, and in the small hours of the night he was still too happily excited for sleep. About two o'clock he became aware of an unusual odour, creeping into his room through the chinks of the door.

“ It smells like something burning,” he thought, and sprang out of bed.

There was smoke on the lower landing, and it was issuing from the closed door of Harvey's room. Arno dashed down the stair and pushed the door open. Harvey was lying asleep in his chair, scarcely visible through the smoke; in front of him a decanter, a glass, an overturned candlestick, and a pile of closely-pressed newspapers slowly burning.

“ Harvey, Harvey ! ” shouted Arno. But Harvey did not stir.

Arno seized a pitcher of water from the inner room, and dashed it over the table. The fire in the papers was checked, but the pile smouldered, and the flame threatened to break out again. The water was exhausted, and Arno saw only one way of getting rid of the danger. He seized the pile of burning papers, and fled with them down to the yard, letting himself out with Harvey's key, which had been lying on the table. Rain was falling heavily, and he soused the mass of papers in the pools, separating them carefully until the last spark was extinguished in their charred remains. Then he

hastened to gather them up again and carry them back to Harvey's room, anxious to guard his friend from detection of what looked like folly, and from reproach for endangering the safety of the mills.

Having proceeded so far, he remembered the desirability of avoiding the notice of the watchman, and, hearing no sound, concluded the man had fallen asleep, and that his movements had escaped observation.

He crept noiselessly up the stairs again, feeling how necessary it was to finish the adventure unnoticed, and reaching Harvey's room, faced the urgent need of a speedy removal of all traces of this startling occurrence.

Harvey had caught some of the saving water in his face, and was now sitting up, staring stupidly in the darkness, and wondering what had happened. Arno lighted a lantern and placed it on the table.

Harvey swore at him incoherently and demanded to know what, in the name of everything unmentionable, he was doing in his room at this hour of the night.

“I've saved you and the buildings, that's all!” said Arno. “You got your papers on fire, and but for me you'd be a chairful of cinders sitting there.”

Harvey stood up, and reeled, and swore again.

“Would you like another splash of water?” asked Arno. “There's plenty more in my room.”

He disappeared and returned with his own pitcher, soaked a towel in the water, and wrapped it about Harvey's head.

“You young beggar!” stuttered Durrant. “I'll report you to the Boss!”

As the shock acted on his nerves, however, and his sober senses began to return, he gradually became quiet, and realized the situation; but he still strove to throw the blame of whatever had happened on Arno.

“You sat down here to drink among your candles and papers, with the mills at your mercy!” persisted Arno. “I often told you what would happen if you did it. Now stop

swearing, and let us do what we can to keep this nasty matter quiet."

Harvey leaned his aching head on his hand, and at last saw the facts in all their bearings. If he could not put the blame on Arno, he was in Arno's power. The only chance was to remove the traces of the burning. He roused himself to help the boy who was at work clearing away the ashes of paper from the table, and putting things generally in order.

"These wet papers can be safely stowed away in your cupboard," said Arno, "with the broken glass and the candlestick; and a pile of books will cover the burnt spot in the wood of the table."

By the time these things were done Harvey had recovered almost all his wits.

"My dear boy," he said, "I owe you a debt of gratitude. I confess I was very tired, and fell asleep over some work. But you make a mistake if you think that any slight refreshment I may have taken had anything to do with this accident. Of course if you give your views to Robert Montgomery——"

"Harvey!" shouted Arno.

"What?"

"Don't dare to tell me that you think I would betray you in this matter—or any other!"

Harvey looked at the lad's blazing eyes, and knew he was safe.

"I won't," he said. "I believe you would die rather than split. It's an unfortunate affair, and you've taken a lot of trouble for me. But don't get cross and scold. It's all over, I hope, and we mustn't let it happen again."

Harvey was truly himself now, his handsome face lit up with smiles, an affectionate pleading look in his eyes. He held out his hand and Arno grasped it.

"All right, Harvey!" said the boy, with a break in his voice. "Let us go to bed and forget about it."

Durrant was soon in bed and sound asleep, with a parting thought of his secure hold on Arno's affectionate fidelity; but

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Arno lay tossing till the six o'clock bell of the factory rang over his head, trying to discount the recklessness of his friend's conduct, and to re-establish Harvey in his niche among the heroes.

Next day there was an excursion for the young people, a long walk to a little village which had possessed a fascination for the children in the old days, chiefly as being a centre where great numbers of pigeons congregated, covering the thatches of the cottages and clustering on the chimneys. One particular farm-house was as the citadel of this stronghold of birds, and the children had named it the Pigeons' Home. The farmer's wife was famous for appetizing bannocks cooked on her griddle while tea was a-making, and it was she who supplied the family at Bleachgreens with honey from her hives, which stood round and yellow in the sunshine among the white rose bushes and lavender at the far end of her well-stocked garden. In that garden grew and flourished every flower containing nectar especially delicious to the bees, and the busy hoarders of sweets throve so well among those particular hedges that when an unusually large and loud bee was seen or heard about Bleachgreens the children had been used to declare that it must certainly be a traveller from Pigeons' Home.

Sara's many “I remembers” had led to enquiries about Mrs. Rosemary and the bees, and a walk to her little farm had been proposed, Colonel Stevenson consenting to extend his visit to the Montgomeries over yet another day or two.

Only Sara, Arno, the twins, and Hugh had sufficient enthusiasm for the pigeons, the bees, the old garden, and Mrs. Rosemary to care for the long walk across country over hill and dale, through gaps, and over stiles, to prove themselves still children in their capacity for simple enjoyment. Harvey had got enough of children's parties for the present, and Herminia was above all such trivialities. Mark, as his father's comrade, and prospective successor in the business, and standing in the millowner's estimation next to Harvey Durrant, took

rank as one of the elders, who had outlived the delights of long walks and gossip with an old woman who had a reputation for faery tales and bannocks, and a witchery for bees and pigeons.

Arno had been surprised to find himself one of the excursionists, but a word from Colonel Stevenson had released him from his desk for the day, and he trudged along beside Sara with his sketch-book in his pocket, happier than he had ever felt in his life before.

Quitting the bye-road that wound away by the stiles and through the white gates, they left the mill settlement behind, the rows of girls pulling the yarn in what looked like a long grey unflowered pergola, the busy, ringing carpenter's shed with its chip-littered space in front, the waterside beetles (of thunder deafening to the passer-by), the white lines of the linen bleaching in the elm-walled greenness beyond, the little country-born rivulet with its blossomed banks; and then they began to climb a green hill of long, undulating slopes, which, though only a high, hilly, far-reaching field, looked imposing in height by comparison with the general flatness of the landscape. Near the top of the hill stood an ancient tree, great in size and age, and under its spreading branches the children in younger days had been used to throw themselves on the grass to rest, and to assort the lapfuls of wild flowers which were the spoils of their wanderings.

Sara dropped on the grass now, out of the strong sunshine into the wavering, gold-laced shadows of the stirring boughs.

"Oh, I feel young again!" she said, laughing. "I see where I am now. I see the woods in the sky that mean Shane's Castle Park. I see the river pouring between them under the big bridge. I see the mill-race and the rows of cottages, and the dangerous strips of garden by the 'tail-race,' where children were not allowed to stray. On the other side I see the foaming weir, and the little bridge across the river to the house. Oh, where are my lapfuls of wild anemones, purple, crimson, and lilac, my heaps of primroses and violets, my

chains of daisies? Where are my Easter Monday eggs, dyed to match all the flowers, boiled so hard as to roll up and down hill safely, till an impertinent stone put itself in the way and smashed them!”

“You are droll, Sara!” said Hugh. “One would think it was some aged dame in her second childhood to hear you talking!”

“Three years,” said Sara. “What an age! Three years in Italy. With Italy between me and this—it is a lifetime.”

“Italy is so different,” said Arno. “Sara is seeing this place as I saw it when I came here first. A different landscape, different people, other expressions and meanings.”

“Oh, *you*! I give you up,” said Hugh, laughing. “But, Sara! Why, I suppose one part of this earth cannot be so *very* different from another. You have trees, rivers, hills, valleys, flowers, streams, and men and women. True, you had in Italy higher mountains, bigger churches, darker complexions; but I am sure if I went there I should discover that there is everywhere a great deal of family likeness——”

“Look at that flock of sheep in the hollow,” said Sara, softly. “Those grey shades melting out of the green among them!”

She turned her head, and saw Arno busy sketching that lovely pastoral vignette, rapid touches, sparing lines giving all the feeling in the scene, of life, sweetness, movement, and repose, besides something inexpressible by words.

“Truly you have gathered that flock into your fold!” said Sara wonderingly, looking over his shoulder. “You have thieved them from their owner!”

“Yes,” said Arno, laughing. “They are now more mine than his!”

“What about market day?” said Hugh. “I’d like to see you and him comparing financial results.”

“Your flock won’t provide mutton for your dinner,” said Juliet.

“Now, don’t make Sara angry,” said Olive. “Italy has driven her nearly as mad as Arno, and if we allow her to go

on talking we shall not get to Pigeons' Home until this day fortnight."

Mrs. Rosemary was found in a picturesque corner of her garden brilliant with tall flower-spikes against a dense, dark hedge, putting stakes to her hollyhocks of pink and crimson and buff; and the picture was transferred to the sketch-book by Arno while the rest of the invaders were saying, "How do you do?" and "Have you plenty of honey?" and "Is the rheumatism gone?" and "How long do your bannocks take to cook, for we are thirsting for tea?" Sara was the only one who saw what Arno was doing, and peeping over his shoulder, whispered:

"There she is, immortal! She will grow old, and her garden will wither, but this happy and vivid moment of her life will be forever!"

"How?" asked Arno, closing his page and putting up his pencil.

"When you are a great painter, of world-wide fame, all your sketches will be prized above jewels and gold!"

"Sara! What do you mean? Do you believe it, or are you only making fun of me?"

"Of course I am in earnest. Haven't I seen work—don't I know?"

"Oh, I have had such dreams!" said Arno, drawing a deep breath.

"I know them, for I have had them myself," said Sara sympathetically.

Arno's face fell.

"Women can't do it," he said. "You have no female Raffaële nor Michelangelo. If my dreams are to come true they ought to be different from yours."

"And so they are. Mine have been dreams of enthusiasm, yours are prophetic. With me the spirit were willing, if the flesh had not been given to me so weak. I have other work to do probably. But—don't laugh too much, Arno, the realization of your dreams would be the realization of mine.

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I want *somebody* to do glorious things under my eyes. When you do splendid works I shall feel like your, and their mother. Am I quite too ridiculous? You may laugh now if you want to.”

“Laugh!” said Arno. “I could laugh for joy. All I have wanted is a little sympathy. I have been dreadfully lonely in my thoughts, which everyone round me would have jeered at.”

“I know,” said Sara, nodding sagely. “Trade, and not Art, is the Montgomery god. You must come and see father and me when we settle down in the dear old house in Donegall Place. Father would be nearly as bad as Uncle Robert about ‘practical’ aims, only for Italy and your darling old *padre*. We have not had proper opportunity yet to talk about that good old friend of yours.”

Arno stood looking straight at her and drinking in every word. He drew his hand across his eyes and held up his head. His heart had risen high, and was thrilling with much that he could not have expressed then, even to Sara.

He began at once to make another drawing, which was scarcely finished before a shout came from the cottage that the bannocks were baked.

Chapter XII

“I mean that my Word is better than Yours”

ROBERT MONTGOMERY had a few words to say to Arno, but he did not speak till after the Stevensons had gone home.

On the morning after their departure the boy was called by the mill-owner into his private office.

“I want you to explain a matter that has come to my knowledge,” he said. “The watchman tells me that you paid a mysterious visit to the yard in the small hours of Tuesday night. What were you doing?”

Arno was taken by surprise. He thought of his promise to Harvey, and hesitated.

“Speak out, sir. There is nothing I detest so much as secrecy.”

“So do I. But I would rather you did not ask me about this, Mr. Montgomery.”

Robert bounced in his chair.

“I should not wonder. It naturally occurs to one that a person who steals out of a house, afraid of being heard, and steals in again has some reason for disliking to be questioned about his movements.”

Arno was silent.

“I am also told that you are in the habit of going out at four o’clock in the morning to walk and sketch in the fields.”

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“As I am always in my place at six, I did not think you could object to it, sir.”

“On Tuesday night it was only two o’clock, and dark and wet. You were not sketching then. You were carrying a bundle up the stairs, and you were endeavouring to escape observation.”

“That is true,” said Arno, after a few moments’ reflection.

“Go on,” said Robert.

“It was a bundle of papers that had caught fire. I carried them down and extinguished the fire in the yard.”

Robert sat aghast.

“So, when you can’t go out to sketch you sit up and set fire to your papers, at the risk of burning down the mills!”

“I am not in the habit of doing that. The fire occurred through an accident for which I was not accountable.”

Montgomery fumed, and tossed his letters about on the table.

“Upon my word, you are a nice trustworthy young gentleman. And your coolness would be amusing if it were not so impertinent. But for your father’s memory, sir, I would turn you out of doors on the instant.”

Arno’s face went white.

“If you cannot trust me, do not spare me on my father’s account.”

“Humph!” said Robert. “That is more impertinence, I suppose.”

“No, sir.”

“Why did you not speak out at once, and tell me the next morning of what had occurred? Why did you leave it to the watchman to report on your conduct?”

“If I had felt myself to blame I should have told you, sir.”

“I admire your coolness. Felt yourself to blame, indeed! Well, my high and mighty gentleman, for the future you will not be at liberty to range about the premises in the night time. Go to your bed in proper time, and stay in it till the hour to rise for your lawful work. I will have no half

measures, no half-hearted service from persons in my employment."

Arno stood dumb with dismay at this sentence.

"Do you hear me, sir?"

"Yes, Mr. Montgomery."

"See you obey me then, or worse will come of it. Try to follow the example of Harvey Durrant in straightforward behaviour and attention to business. You may go now, Warrender, but remember I have my eye on you."

Arno left the master's presence with his head well up, looking, as Robert thought, quite self-willed and unconquered. "He will obey, however," reflected Montgomery. "He knows I am his only friend. The lad is no fool." And having thus disposed of the matter, he turned his attention to the business of the morning.

Arno quitted the office with his heart throbbing in wild rebellion, less for the injustice he suffered in bearing Harvey's blame while directed to look up to him as an example of propriety and rectitude, than for the tyranny that had put an end to his rambles and sketchings at dawn.

The question of how he was to live without the only joy of his life sounded with a dull persistence in his ear through the hours of the day.

"But surely Harvey will come to my relief," he thought. "Mr. Montgomery has always known that I went out in the early hours to sketch. He considered it folly, but he never before forbade it."

In the evening, when work was over, he went to Harvey's room, and gave him an account of the interview with Robert.

Harvey laughed.

"You are such a fellow for taking things to heart. It was quite to be expected that the watchman would spy on your little excursion to the yard, and that Robert should make a fuss. It has all blown over now. Don't bother any more about it."

Arno had not dwelt on the fact that he had borne the blame

of setting the papers on fire rather than betray Harvey, but he had expected Durrant to express regret and to propose to exonerate him.

“I am forbidden to go out sketching in the mornings,” said Arno. “That is the worst of it.”

Harvey laughed again. “Are you a baby in long clothes? How is Robert to know whether you go out or not? The watchman is not aware that you are now forbidden. Montgomery has probably already forgotten all about the matter. You know his temper. A storm of ten minutes, and all is over.”

“I am on my honour. I do not intend to deceive or disobey orders,” said Arno hotly. “You can release me if you will, Harvey. A word from you about the papers will put me right.”

“My dear boy, it was not I who took the papers to the yard. It was not I who was seen skulking up and down the staircase. I did not even see the papers on fire. I have it on your word only that the fire originated in my room and not in yours——”

Arno stared.

“You mean to say——”

“I mean that my word is better than yours in the estimation of Robert Montgomery. So you had better continue to hold your tongue. Take the advice of a friend, and act as if nothing of this had happened. Now, don’t stand staring at me there any longer. I want to read my paper in peace. Go off to your room, or else sit down and be sociable. Have a glass of wine and look over these sporting lists with me. I can put you on a good tip. I know you have a hoard of money stored up somewhere. Couldn’t do better with it than put it on a horse——”

“As you give me my choice, I will go off to my room,” said Arno; and he went.

Left alone, Harvey poured out a glass of wine and drank it, threw aside his sporting paper, and walked up and down the floor with his hands in his pockets.

"After all I don't want it to come to that," he said, "though he's such a mule in his fixed notions that I believe he would never split. I've no wish to quarrel with him; he's useful and pleasant as a friend here beside me. Still less do I want to destroy his character with Montgomery. But he ought to be able to see that the fault of the fire would be looked on as much more serious in me than in him, and I can't forget his cheek in suggesting that I should give myself away to save him from the consequences of a circumstantial blunder."

He sat down and made some notes on his sporting list, then threw it aside again, had another glass of wine, and gave another thought or two for Arno's grievance.

"I'm sorry for the poor little beggar," he reflected. "It was his only pleasure. And there is another view to be taken of the matter. If he were forced to give up his drawing and his dreams there is no knowing whether he might not run a race with me in the business. I have taken the measure of Hugh, but I have never yet quite got to the bottom of Arno's capabilities. There is a suggestion of a reserve of power about him, a hint that he would do supremely well whatever he thoroughly flung himself into. And Robert has a sneaking, sentimental liking for him, though he can't forgive his indifference to the glory of the successful man of trade. I'm a long-headed chap myself. Arno isn't that, but he is something else that wins, and I can't see him outrun me in the race. If he shot past me in Montgomery's opinion and good graces, Sir Jonah would not tolerate it. He would stop my screw, and perhaps wash his hands of me."

Next day Arno avoided speaking to or looking at him in the office.

"He's in the sulks," thought Harvey. "I must try to win him back by a little benevolence."

That evening after office hours he turned out of the yard with Robert, and walked up the long avenue with him, alongside the mill-race, past the silent "beetles," where the huge dripping wheel had stopped turning for the night, and the

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quiet of its neighbourhood seemed almost portentous. In the distance the shadows were massing together the great trees that walled the bleach-greens, and the mists that helped to make the linen white were gathering over the green levels which were growing grey.

“I want to say a word to you about Arno,” said Harvey apologetically.

“What about him?” asked Robert.

“That affair of Tuesday night.”

“I don’t want to hear any more about it,” said Robert shortly.

“Of course not. You have been very forgiving. But I wanted to say that I believe the accident occurred without any fault of his——”

“I haven’t supposed that he meant to burn the mills,” said Robert testily. “But there must be something wrong when papers are set fire to in the middle of the night. When a disaster has occurred ‘intentions’ are of little consequence. I have reprimanded the boy, however, and there is no need to return to the subject.”

“No. But let me say one word. That about the sketching. It can really do no harm. He goes out in the daylight an hour or two before work. He gets air and exercise, and it inclines him to go to bed early at night.”

“You are very good-natured, Harvey. I have always perceived that.”

“It is not as though he sat up to burn oil and read or write,” said Harvey, smiling as he thought of his own case. “I thought if you would reconsider the matter and allow him an hour or so on a summer morning for his drawing. It would keep him in good humour——”

“Is it right to humour his moods? He ought to give all his mind to his serious business. The boy has talent and industry, and I believe him to be as straight as a rod. But he has qualities and leanings which may interfere with his career. His imagination is more attracted by the beautiful than the

useful. Much profit abstract beauty will bring to a man who has failed in life ! I have known such failures, as I have often told him. My desire is to place him in a good position in this business for his father's sake. But if he himself were determined to frustrate me I should have to give it up——”

“I hope your generosity will not be disappointed,” said Harvey, still in a pleading tone, which seemed to suggest a doubt and a necessity for apologetic interference. “But I ask you to look on this as a matter of a little recreation. We all need it. I myself always feel the better after a delightful evening spent at your house, for instance. Of course Arno is not, like me, of a social turn——”

“True,” said Robert, “and I will reconsider the matter. I am truly glad that the lad has such a friend as you by his side. And, by the way, Mrs. Montgomery was saying this morning that we had seen nothing of you over there this week. Come and dine to-morrow, will you ?”

“Delighted,” said Durrant, and parted from his patron half-way across the metal bridge that divided the mills from the residence of Bleachgreens.

As he retraced his steps along the river bank, and over the village road-bridge, and down the avenue by the mill-race, past the children playing and the men smoking outside the workers' cottages, and into the yard among the buildings of the silent works, he reflected on all that had been said between him and Robert, and weighed the advantages that might result to himself. He had done well, having strengthened his own position in the esteem of the mill-owner ; also regained a hold on the boy by procuring him the permission to continue the studies which must eventually end in a division between Arno, the artist, and Robert, the man of business.

In the course of the following day the mill-owner took occasion to say to Arno :

“Harvey Durrant has been interceding for you about that silly sketching of yours, and has persuaded me to allow it to you as recreation. You are at liberty to go out for an hour or

two on summer mornings, but see that you do not exceed this permission. And be thankful you have such a friend as Durrant.”

For some days afterwards a struggle went on between Arno's mind and his heart. His affection for Harvey cried on him to forget and forgive the wrong he had suffered at the latter's hands, while his judgment urged the dishonesty of Durrant's conduct and counsel as a reason for renouncing all intimacy with his “friend.” He could not bring himself to express thanks for the intercession which had gained him the remission of a punishment incurred through his very fealty to the cowardly intercessor. Harvey's taunt of ingratitude and his laugh of derision alike left Arno unconvinced. With a pang of the heart he acknowledged to himself that his admiration and love for the man who had once been a hero to him were gone beyond recall. The consciousness of Harvey's attractions, when he chose to be affectionate and amusing, his smiles, which seemed to mean so much more than they did, and the caressing tones that made him the delightful companion of an hour, all these remained on Arno's imagination as alluring facts very difficult to be dealt with.

As the days passed on, however, Harvey's attentions and kindnesses began to win on him again, and the hardness of his own resentment gave way, little by little, to a sense of the recovery of something precious which he had believed to be utterly lost.

“After all,” he thought, “his ideas are different from mine, and it may have seemed to him better not to disturb the impression accidentally made on Mr. Montgomery's mind. As he says, I might have been blamed quite as much for running about with fire instead of sounding an alarm as for being myself the author of the accident. The only difference would have been that two would have been blamed instead of one, the elder being held as much the more culpable in proportion to his superiority in age and experience.”

Having suffered many such alternations of feeling and

reasoning, Arno, sitting at his sketching on a green bank on top of a hill flooded with light of the rising sun, suddenly came to a conclusion which was as the undoing of painful bands about his heart. He would dwell no longer on the wrong done to him by Harvey. He would believe that his friend had meant no serious harm to anybody, and he would love him even in despite of his faults.

Having got so far, his generosity would go even further than was necessary. In the evening he walked into Harvey's room with a particularly beautiful drawing in his hand, and held it towards him, saying :

“I made it this morning,—thanks to you.”

His pale face flushed with the effort of saying words which he knew to be more kind than just. But Harvey rejoiced him by receiving the overture with affectionate effusion.

“Let us frame it and hang it up as a token of the renewal of friendship,” he said, laughing. “I will get it done, and we will hang it here.”

Chapter XIII

Three Life-Long Years

SARA and her father were soon comfortably settled at home in the old house, which was opened up to the air and the light in a manner unknown to it since the days of Colonel Stevenson's youth. The old servants, who had led a dull life behind the drawn blinds and the dusty windows, had rubbed their eyes like the waking servitors in the Sleeping Beauty's Castle, and were all alert with the new life that had entered with the sunshine and the return of the master and the little mistress. Nurse Canavan had taken up her position in the big room that was the nursery, where Sara's dolls were still enjoying a long sleep in the cupboard, and where her crude drawings decorated the walls. Sara laughed as she looked at them all with curiosity, making Kitty resentful of her contempt for the ways and doings of her nursling of three years ago.

"And I will say, Miss Sara, that you're too grown-up for your years. Many a young lady of fifteen is in the nursery still, or leastwise the school-room. It's them furrin' countries that has run you up like a plant in a hot-house. The Colonel ought to be sendin' you to school the time it is——"

"You heartless old woman, would you have me to leave him? Haven't I been schooling all the time? and how many languages do you think I know, Kitty Canavan?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. And what matter if you knew them all? Sure English is plain, and why wouldn't everybody speak it? And there's many's the thing that ladies does that

you know nothin' about. There's dancin', and playin' the piano, and makin' flowers on silk, or stitchin' them on canvas—look at the beautiful chairs and sofas in the drawin'-room that your grandmothers worked ; it did me good to see Marget takin' the covers off them—that never was off them, except to be washed, since before you were born, my dearie."

"It does me good, too, to look at them," said Sara ; "to see what dear, industrious, fine-fingered ladies those good old people were. And I'm not going to be idle, Kitty Canavan, though neither embroidering nor piano-playing is my forte. I have my mandoline and I have my voice, and I can carry these about with me into my Daddy's workshop. And I have my tongue, and I can use my pen and my pencil. He would rather be talked to and sung to, than played the piano to ; and I intend to copy his drawings, and write his notes and letters."

"Ah, well," said Mrs. Canavan to old Flynn, the butler, "it's a young lady out an' out that I've brought home to you."

"You said it right," said Flynn, "an' there isn't such another young lady walkin' the streets of Belfast. Look at the kerriage of her comin' into the room, the sit of her head on her shoulders, and the step of her that ye wouldn't hear on the stairs unless ye could hear the grass growin' too. An' as for eyes—they'd light a ball room ! But the like of her laugh for the music of the birds myself never heard. An' what for would ye want her to be a babby of her age ? The sooner she's a woman the better for the good of the whole of us, Mrs. Canavan."

"You're a Connaught man, Flynn, an' you can put all that off your tongue without meanin' the half of it."

"God forgive your bad mind, Mrs. Canavan ! If there was to be nothing but babbies in the world, sure the world would be nothin' but a nursery, an' nobody grown up enough to mind the childher !"

Sara was indeed at a new stage of her existence, and was busy taking life up where she had left it, perceiving immense changes around her, quite out of proportion to the lapse of time, scarcely noticing the fact that those changes were more

in herself than in other people and in "things." All the possibilities of making the old house livable and comfortable opened before her. A room was chosen for her father's "workshop," a place wherein he was bent on making himself happy, a large room at the back of the house, giving on the old town-garden, which was a remnant of the days before the shops, so despised of Sir Jonah and so genially welcomed by the Colonel, had invaded the handsome "Place," and before spreading small streets and multiplying factory chimneys could be seen from the upper back windows of the time-honoured dwelling of the Stevensons. Into this room the Colonel gathered various kinds of tools and strange implements, which Sara regarded with admiration and delight. He did not feel altogether sure of the uses he intended to make of some of them, but there were possibilities hanging round each and all which gave a wonderful air of promise and a hint of mystery to the whole apartment.

Here Sara would bring her afternoon tea-table and rouse him out of a fit of abstraction over some strange (to her) cabalistic markings on paper, little drawings and plans in which he saw meanings invisible to anyone but himself. To his daughter's questions he had no very satisfactory answers.

"You see, Sara, this is a wheel, and these little stars are more wheels, and these curves are belts, and this black smudge is an engine. I want to make a new system to improve on this complicated and dangerous bit of machinery. It could be done; labour saved as to pain and durance, and still employment given. Time and fuel would be spared."

"Come to your tea, Daddy dear, and go on telling me!" Sara would cry; and would strive to follow the idea that was so happily occupying his mind and leading him to forget his loss of bodily action and liberty.

Walking by his side as he drove himself in his chair about the town, Sara renewed her acquaintance with the old streets, looked in the old shop windows, led the Colonel through the gates into the Linenhall grounds among the children at play,

but could find no more fairies, nor did she want to plunge into the bushes in search of books of cambric patterns with gorgeous wrappings of gold and richly coloured papers. All the paths had grown small and narrow, the trees that had been the outposts of dreamland forests looked dusty and shaggy, if not stunted, to eyes that had rested on the velvety blue-green of the stone pine and the darkly draped giants of the Alps and the Rhine-land. Still Sara's loyal heart refused to be disappointed in the friends of her youth, and the Colonel listened with a smile to her quaint descriptions of what had been, and somehow was no more, by reason of the three life-long years of absence which separated his unknown daughter of yesterday from his well-known daughter of to-day.

But a triumph was in store for her when the Colonel proposed to introduce her to the inner quadrangle of the Linenhall buildings, in a part of which was located an old-established library for the use of a certain circle of elect subscribers.

"We can have a better class of books from here," he said, "than can be had of the circulating libraries."

For the moment the joy of books was less in Sara's mind than the triumph of passing old Paul, who stood as ever at the entrance, in the same long coat, and the fur cap which seemed to grow on his head, not a hair or a thread changed since the days when she had feared his scowl. To see him stand back with the terrible cap uplifted while her father and his tall girl passed under the entry arch gave her a curious thrill, and the miracles wrought by time were made more than ever forcibly evident to her. Within the once mysterious precincts of the inner quadrangle was found no Arabian-nightish rose garden, no Alhambra-like fountain dripping diamonds, but the library with its walls of books was even more interesting to her opening mind than the realization of the old visions would have been to the imagination of her childhood. Laden with Ruskin's *Modern Painters* she returned home even lighter of foot and heart than usual, and with coming hours of delight already reflected in her eyes.

The father and daughter were not allowed to feel lonely. Friends from far and near gathered round to welcome Colonel Stevenson back to the old family house so long peopled only by the shadows that held memories folded away in silent corners; and their feelings of pity were soon changed to admiration of a brave man, all alive with unconquerable energy and cheerfulness. Any or every afternoon he received all who came to see him, but only to a few chosen friends would he go out to dine: to Mrs. Fontaine, Sir Jonah Cunnygham, the Montgomeries, and perhaps one or two others.

It amazed and amused Sir Jonah to see a man of soldierly temper, physique, and habits so deeply interested and absorbed in trivial little doings in a retired apartment which he chose to call his workshop.

"There he potters away for hours, I believe," remarked Sir Jonah to Robert Montgomery, "and smiles when you go in as if you had interrupted him in some delightful pursuit. I could understand it if he were engaged in constructing a new explosive for the good of his fellow-creatures in connection with his profession, but, as far as I can see, it is mere pottering. Still, as he seems contented, one cannot criticise too much. And that little girl of his certainly seems to make him comfortable. I never could see the advantage of having children. I beg your pardon, Montgomery, but tastes differ, you know."

"Yes, yes," said Robert impatiently, with a mental glance at his own fine sons and the carrying on of the name of Montgomery into futurity.

"But I see that a girl may be a comfort. And she is a sharp, clever creature, too; very good company. So different from a boy. As for young men——"

Robert gave another flying thought to the fact that futurity would not be a loser when the familiar figure of his old friend should no more be seen, that Willows' Burn would still be Willows' Burn, growing its peaches and paying its taxes, through the hands of perhaps Harvey Durrant or may be of some other man. But on points like this Robert was not argumenta-

tive, reserving his masterfulness for men and matters more particularly connected with his business. Sir Jonah might be crass and priggish, and live for himself only, but he was an old man and an old friend all the same, and it was never Robert's habit to quarrel with his friend's theories or with his peculiar ways of living.

Mrs. Fontaine was the most frequent visitor at the house in Donegall Place. Sara regarded her with new eyes. She was not so ancient to her now as she had been in the well-remembered hours of the child's misery and the woman's tactful kindness. The old lady's thin, upright figure, her soft cap of quilled net covering her white hair, her black dress that scorned fashion, even her mysterious bag beloved of the poverty-stricken, all were there as in the days that lay behind those three years which were as thirty. But the crisp, caustic goodness in her face, and the tireless energy of her acts and movements, seized the girl as expressions of power which had nothing in it suggestive of senility. A pure life in pursuit of good, a certain frugality of living which had for its object the reserve of a share for the relief of others, an impassioned temperament controlled to sober uses, all these seemed to have combined to provide her with an old-age pension of perennial youth.

"Yes, yes," she said to the Colonel when he admired her eloquence and agility, "I have great lasting in me. But my lease of strength and energy is running out, and I must try to enjoy it until time is up."

Mrs. Fontaine's views on the subject of the Colonel's occupations were entirely different from Sir Jonah's. Though admiring the courage of the soldier, she was an enemy of war, and perceiving that her old friend, who was still in her eyes quite a young man, was now amusing himself with efforts at little ingenious contrivances, she encouraged him in such peaceful pursuits, and felt bound to stimulate him to higher ambition on similar lines. And she became busy with plans for supplying him with fruitful ideas.

Chapter XIV

A Secret Fad

"Now, Sara," said the Colonel, "I don't want anyone to know about this fad of mine. Our friends may be aware that I am 'pottering' here in my workshop with all kinds of vagaries in my head, and may say it is very good for me to be so employed, and all the rest of it, but my real ambition must be a secret between us two. Until I have perfected an important invention and patented it, even Mrs. Fontaine must not find me out."

"It will be very hard to keep her out of it," said Sara, "she is so truly interested and so anxious to see what you are doing."

"And gives me so much advice," said the Colonel, "and tries to lead my trivial efforts into serious paths well trodden in all seasons by her nimble feet in their weatherproof goloshes! I will keep my own counsel by means of some small constructions with which I shall amuse and baffle her."

Sara smiled as she thought of the dear old lady's keen wits outwitted, and her sharp, kind, critical eyes, that seemed to see everything, blinded by a little dust thrown into them. If anyone else had proposed so to deal with her the girl would have strongly objected. For her own part she would have been proud of her father's mere effort and aim, glad to have his ambition recognized and honoured, even though it were to end in nothing. Something of this she tried to put before him, but to no purpose. A little opposition of a small kind had

power to irritate the spirit that had accepted a great misfortune so bravely.

"No, no," he said, "you are looking at the matter through the eyes of your years. 'Nothing succeeds but success.' I have lived long enough to know how attempts which seem unlikely to attain their object are jested out of existence. I can see the incredulous consternation of Robert Montgomery, who believes in his murderous machinery; the amused derision of Sir Jonah, who thinks any machinery good enough for the factory hand; I can hear the quips of the youngsters, and even Jane Montgomery's—I must not say 'vulgar' laughter, though we know that even a duchess can laugh vulgarly."

Sara seeing that he was nettled made no more remonstrance, and threw herself loyally into the keeping of the secret.

Mrs. Fontaine, however, unconsciously pressed herself into the service. It was not very far from her house in Fisherwick Place to Donegall Place, and she would drop in of an evening, bringing her knitting, an everlasting fabric of perennial growth, destined to clothe the limbs of shivering childhood and rheumatic eld.

"Knee-caps, my dear," she would say. "You don't require knee-caps. Neither——" she checked herself with a cough. Neither did the Colonel, unfortunately, but there was no reason for telling him so.

She was always forced to stay for dinner, or supper, as the Colonel liked to call the latest meal. "Supper gives one so much more freedom," he said. "You are not obliged to swallow so much poison, nor to sit so long over your food. And there is time for an hour or two in the workshop and a turn in the garden before bed-time."

During these visits her genial presence was a boon to the Colonel, chiefly on account of her vivid memories of his own boyhood, and the youth of his father and mother, together with her attractive way of putting long-past scenes before him, moving and coloured like reality. To Sara she was a fascinat-

ing personality, bringing a bracing air into the house, and leaving a glow of warmth behind; and this was felt over and above the girl's perception of, and gratitude for, her father's enjoyment.

Her tales of old times, her presentment of characters seemed to hang the walls with pictures, to bring a murmur of pleasant voices or of music out of silent corners, and a patter of dancing feet on polished floors. All this one had to be thankful for while the rapid needles clicked and Sara learned to do wonderful stitches in wool on long needles, before the deferred lecture on the uses of the talents came on, and a visit to the workshop provided her with a text to suit the Colonel's dilatoriness, his idle playing with the manifest gifts of Providence.

The occasions for her unconscious service arose quite naturally. Sara must come to her house of evenings to meet the factory girls whom she gathered in to teach them to sew, to amuse them, talk to them, lecture them. She was proud of having made the girls very fond of her, while she inspired them with a little wholesome fear in cases where there were deviations from good conduct. In these matters she earnestly desired that Sara should learn to follow in her footsteps. She had large schemes for doing good in this way if she could only persuade some bright young women with a little money and plenty of idle time, or one or the other, to join her in some such undertaking. Sara, being so young, and so near at hand, appeared to be a promising neophyte.

And then, to know the girls and their difficulties and temptations, their labours and sufferings, one should see them in their daily life, turning out at the sound of the six o'clock bell into the winter air, toiling all day in the high rooms of the flax-spinning mills with the thermometer at an intolerable figure, the atmosphere reeking with hot moisture, girls and women scarce decently covered with the slight garment that barely enables them to stand to their post in the work that is killing them.

"Then," said the old lady, "when the other six o'clock

(evening) bell rings, clattering over the roofs and chimneys away at the back of your house, you hear it while you are amusing yourself with a book, or your mandoline, or a sketch, or a bit of useless embroidery, or maybe pottering after your father in his workshop—play-shop I call it! Come with me and meet the shivering creatures, running out of the mill rooms that are like the hot room of the Turkish bath, a thin shawl huddled over head and shoulders, and as much of the wet cotton rag as it will reach to cover. See their white faces, and hear them coughing. Hardly one of them will live to be forty years of age. I have seen them through their last illnesses. I have sat by them dying—they drop off like flies——”

“Why do they do it?” Sara would cry. “Emigration would be better than that.”

“My dear, people talk of emigration as if it were retirement on three acres and a cow.”

“Not quite,” said Sara laughing. “There is work for the emigrants.”

“Far-off fields are green, Sara. We bundle the creatures into ships out of our sight, and then we have done with them. The clever ones get something to do, and get on, but then the clever ones could do the same at home. Who asks what becomes of the average man or woman with their averagely-endowed children who are shipped off like a cargo of jute or oakum, and are swallowed down the maw of some big American city?”

“I thought they went to the virgin lands,” said Sara, “to build log huts and smoke the pipe of peace with friendly red-Indians.”

“You thoughtless child! Where would the ruck of the emigrants find capital for such undertakings? Who would give them their tools and travel them out to the wilderness? I say again some will find the way, but most of them gravitate into city lanes and slums, where the fate of their ignorance, home-grown on a Connaught bog perhaps, or in a Belfast factory, is worse than that of the mill-hands we are speaking

of. The battle is to the strong. Before Jack overcame the giant in the fairy-tale, the monster's castle was strewn with the bones of witless adventurers. You laugh at my illustrations, Sara, but they have their point."

If Sara laughed, it was at the expression of fierce indignation on the face of the kind old woman, who looked as if the welfare and comfort of the working classes were in the hands of some hydra-headed monster who withheld it from them, and whom she would like to decapitate. But after laughing, Sara pondered, and she willingly accompanied Mrs. Fontaine in her visitations of the factories, and spent evenings at her house to instruct and amuse the mill-girls.

The result was a constant stream of information poured in to the Colonel in his workshop by the channel of Sara's keenly observant faculties. She was soon known among the factory overseers as the clever little lady who had such a taste for the working of machinery.

"If you had been a man, Miss," said one of them, "you would have made a capital engineer. There's a splendid genius lost in you. Sure enough many's the improvement is needed, but who's to tackle it? The inventions nowadays all run to make more pleasure for the rich man. The poor man has to sweat and bleed all the same, or if a change comes in anywhere by a clever contrivance, it means that his wages are docked."

"That's just where it is, Sara," said the Colonel when she reported this conversation to him. "My idea is to ease labour and to increase pay. I would like also to set something going that would employ more hands."

"Can you do it?" asked Sara. "It seems such a big ambition."

"It may prove a dream," said the Colonel, "but I think I have hit on something. Remember to give no hint to anyone. I don't feel that I could bear to be jeered at. And the great capitalists would be against me. I want to work in the shade, unnoticed, and, as the saying is, 'make a spoon or spoil a horn.'"

The Colonel did not depend altogether on his daughter's observations for his ultimate knowledge of the interiors of the factories around him. To Mrs. Fontaine's extreme satisfaction he began to wheel his car to their doors, and into all such parts of their buildings as could be entered by a man on wheels instead of legs. She believed that his interest in these places had been created by her exhortations, and loudly applauded it, though valuing it chiefly as encouragement to Sara, who was her pupil on philanthropic lines. Her suggestion of the possible uses of the workshop had been only a brilliant flash of her own imagination. Let her dear friend frivol as much as he pleased with his little makings and modellings. She was really thankful to him for that improved candle-lamp he had made for her, having introduced a new scheme for controlling the spiral wire that gradually moves up the candle. It was quite neat, and very creditable to him, and was a specimen of the kind of thing he was able to accomplish. And now that Sara had so warmly entered into her plans for improving the condition of the factory girls, outside, if not inside the mills, she was willing to leave off scolding, and often forgot even to deliver a lecture.

So, what with one thing and another, Sara had her hands pretty full, attending classes for the continuance of her education on the higher lines, taking long walks by the side of her father's little car, and talking to him about his plans and his ambition, making notes in her own private books, with pen and pencil, of oddities of faces, figures, and characters she met with in the mills and elsewhere, and taking her mandoline of an evening to the club at Mrs. Fontaine's, to play and sing to the mill-girls.

Chapter XV

“ Let me have my Golden Hour ”

As the weeks ran on disappointment was felt by Sara. Arno had never arrived to talk over Italy and the *padre* with her father and herself. He had been pressed to come, and it was supposed that he could have done so after working hours, no objection to such visits having been made by Robert Montgomery when the Colonel had suggested them.

Arno's friends were unaware of the occurrence of the fire at the mills, and the consequent disgrace into which he had fallen.

In compliance with Harvey's request Robert had overlooked the lad's carelessness and his audacity in defending himself, had even retracted his prohibition of the early hours' sketching, yet being a martinet as to the exact fulfilment of duty, he had reserved to himself a certain power of restriction on the offender's movements. Without actually forbidding the visits to which he had formerly agreed, he kept deferring them in such a way as to make his unforgetting watchfulness felt by Arno.

At last, on receiving a special request from the Colonel, who began to suspect that a want of desire on Arno's part was not the hindrance to the visits, Robert relented, and spoke.

“ Warrender, your friends at Donegall Place are particularly anxious to see you. I am a stickler for duty and good conduct, but I have no intention of being a tyrant. You can go to-morrow evening after six o'clock. See that you have every-

thing finished up in the office. Or, if there is anything you cannot manage, Harvey will attend to it."

Arno's heart made a bound. He had begun to fear that Montgomery meant to keep him apart from the Stevensons.

"Thank you, sir," he said.

"That is all very well ; but see that you are home in time. No missing of trains and arriving after Durrant has seen to the locking up of the place."

"There is no fear, sir."

Robert turned away impatiently. The boy's high-and-mighty independence, as he put it to himself, his assumed unconsciousness of having behaved so as to forfeit confidence, irritated the employer, who wished to be kind, and truly believed that he had been generous as well as forgiving.

Arno was not so glad but that he could feel a pang at the reflection on his supposed offence, and the false position in which he stood in his employer's eyes with regard to Harvey, who came and went as he pleased at night, and had the watchman in his pay. A word to Robert, a hint as to Durrant's duplicity, and the relations of the two might be changed. But treachery, even in a fair cause, was impossible to Arno. He thrust back the pain of the moment, and gave way to his joy.

Sara and the Colonel were in the drawing-room waiting for supper when a ring at the hall-door bell announced somebody.

"Mrs. Fontaine !" said the Colonel. "She said she might drop in this evening."

"It is not her ring," said Sara ; "not so jerky."

"You little impertinent ! Shall I tell the dear lady ?"

"No, you won't, Daddy."

"Do you recognize your friends beforehand by the sound of the bell ?"

"Some of them. Don't you think there is character, too, in the touch of a hand on the knocker ?"

"Who is this, then ?"

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I never heard that ring before. But it is a masculine ring, bold and joyful. Somebody is glad to come to us.”

The door opened. “Why, it is Arno! You good boy; at last you have arrived! We have been nearly tired waiting for you.”

“I wanted to come,” cried Arno. “I came the first moment I got leave.”

His face was glowing. His eyes danced with assurance of happiness. He had got friends of his own at last, and liberty to respond to their affectionate kindness. He felt instinctively that they truly cared for him. They scarcely recognized the pale, silent youth who had always seemed to take refuge from unsympathetic surroundings in an almost sullen reserve.

“My boy,” said the Colonel, “you are truly welcome. Here is Sara dying to show you her drawings.”

“Oh, Daddy, he would laugh at them; you know he would.”

“And you are just in time to give me something to say to the *padre*. I had a letter from him yesterday.”

How was it that Arno was soon completely at home with these friends who were comparative strangers to him, seeing that at Bleachgreens he always felt more or less of an alien, although receiving so much bounty there, as well as a certain sort of kindness? He did not think of asking himself, only felt a delightful sense of camaraderie, with fresh air pouring into his heart and imagination like a throwing open of doors and windows in a closed-up house artificially heated.

The simple and unconventional supper, over in reasonable time, leaving an hour for exploring the workshop, was a pleasant variety from the very proper dinner at Bleachgreens, on the one side, and the more usual solitary meal snatched, pencil or book in hand, in his room at the mills, on the other. Italy was discussed, its magical beauty, its fascinating people, its wonders of Art and architecture, the glamour of its atmosphere to the eye and to the soul, its masters of painting and sculpture, its enthusiastic workers of all glorious kinds who

have left their mark for all time on a sordid world, and are, even now, after centuries, arousing the noblest and best that is in the spirit of the traveller from every other land on earth. After supper Arno read the *padre's* letter to the Colonel, and his face became a little clouded as his eyes fell on a few words at the end of it.

"You see he is as anxious as ever to be assured of your devotion to the business," said the Colonel.

"I see," said Arno.

"What am I to say to him?"

"Oh, I am doing my best. I drudge at the desk and make figures in the ledger, while my imagination is making very different figures in spite of my will."

"The *padre* wishes to see you prosper. I believe it is the subject of his earnest prayers."

"And yet he is not a man of the world! It is a superstition with him, that belief in British prosperity. He is inconsistent. But do not let us talk about it. Let me have my golden hour!"

"You shall have it," said the Colonel. "How are you going to take it?"

"You promised me a look at your workshop."

"Come, then," said the Colonel.

To the workshop they went, that large room looking out on the only garden left in the "Place," walled in from the houses of encroaching back streets, sighting a distance of mill chimneys, and lively with the clatter of factory bells, failing the music of long-evicted thrushes and blackbirds. One side of the laboratory was fitted with a long bench littered with tools and various small constructions, finished or unfinished, or as if broken up and thrown aside. On the other side was Sara's easel, a shelf of Art books, and many little properties suggesting her frequent companionship with her father in his working hours.

Arno examined everything with extraordinary zest. Sara's drawings were seized on and criticised with ruthless frankness. For a few characteristic figures from life, of humour verging on



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"SARA'S DRAWINGS WERE SEIZED ON AND CRITICISED
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caricature, he had nothing but approval. Sara pretended not to care, but she was enchanted with his praise.

“In such a funny world,” she said apologetically, “it is impossible not to make jottings of the fun.”

“It isn’t a funny world to me,” said Arno, “except as you point it out to me. This is Robert Montgomery in his most terrible moment, isn’t it? And Mistress Jane delivering a judgment! And Mrs. Fontaine looking fiercely on the frivolities of the age!”

“She is a naughty artist,” said the Colonel. “She has caricatured her Daddy in the agonies of invention.”

“And what about me?” asked Arno, laughing as he turned from one whimsical representation of character to another.

“I will try you to-morrow,” said Sara. “I will take you as saying lugubriously, ‘It isn’t a funny world to me.’”

“Mind that you show it to me,” said Arno, “and you had better do it before I begin to see that it is funny, through your eyes.”

From Sara’s portfolios Arno passed on to the Colonel’s working bench. Here he examined one piece of mechanism after another, simple and difficult, perfect or imperfect, and an expression altogether new settled on his countenance.

The Colonel watched him, first with amusement, believing that these matters would have no attraction for him, and that he would hardly understand their meaning. The lad’s continued silence and intent looks while he examined the models struck him, and he began to watch him with surprise.

“This is a great idea,” said Arno presently. “I hope you will persevere with it. You have very nearly got it.”

“What do you see in it?” asked the Colonel.

“I see a very important improvement in our machinery,” said Arno.

“You astonish me,” said the Colonel. “I never imagined that you could find me out. The friends who penetrate here perceive that I am merely amusing myself, and some of them

Cousin Sara

are hard-headed persons of business, keen on all those matters relating to trade which you dislike and despise."

"I do not despise trade," said Arno. "I only place Art above it, and love her more. But don't you think that all clever construction is a kind of art? Still more all new inventions that benefit the world——"

"Certainly I do," said the Colonel, "but I did not expect to hear of it from you, my boy. And you alarm me a little by surprising my secret."

"How so, sir?" said Arno, astonished.

"I wanted to keep this effort of mine unknown to anyone besides Sara and myself. I may never be able to perfect it, and I don't want to have my failures talked about."

"You will not fail, sir. But I will faithfully keep the secret. And I hope you will let me see how you get on. Part of my distaste for business is on account of the grinding of the working people. Things ought to be made easier for them."

"The employers will always fear being losers by that. What I hope for is a system that will benefit both employer and employed. It seems too much to expect, but my belief is that changes will come, gradually, as strange to think of now as Marconi telegrams. There will be more employment and less painful labour; and the world will scarcely believe that things were ever so cruel as to give rise to the crimes of Anarchists and to the Socialist's dream."

"You are on the right lines to do a part of it, sir," said Arno. "The world is terribly interesting at present. I am glad I am young. I shall see it a good bit further on the way. Science and engineering are both pushing ahead; only Art (and her I love the best and trust the most) is lagging behind, as if weary with her wonderful labours in the past. To help to revive her, to put new life and power into her, is my dearest ambition. No need for me to make a secret of this, for I have no one near me, or sufficiently interested in me, to observe or understand any meaning in my ways or my affairs."

"You have us," said Sara promptly.

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“Have I?” said Arno, colouring. “I feel I have been speaking very boldly to you, Colonel Stevenson.”

“Sara is right,” said the Colonel. “And your boldness has given me pleasure. Come to us as often as you are able, and I am sure we shall understand each other better and better. But meanwhile, stick to your stool in the office. You are very young, and you may yet change, retaining your love of Art, but devoting your energies to the needs of humanity on the practical lines which you seem to understand so well.”

Arno shook his head, but spoke no more on the subject nearest his heart.

“One thing is certain,” he said with a boyish laugh as he bade his friends good-night, “I am a different creature since I came into this house. I scarcely know who I am, yet; but there is a transformation.”

“A little sympathy is a wonderful developer,” said the Colonel. “And don’t stay away till the other fellow returns on you. Montgomery will allow you your evenings, I am sure.”

Chapter XVI

“I believe he will be a Great Man”

“SARA,” said the Colonel next day, “I am greatly surprised by Arno’s keen understanding of practical matters. I believed that artists and poets were bound to be dreamers, occupied only with beauty and the tender feelings of humanity;—I mean ultra sentiment. One always hears that it is so, and this lad’s dislike to trade appeared an illustration of the fact.”

“I can see a difference, Daddy, between loving the sordid aims and practices of trade, and being interested in the designs and inventions that improve its conditions.”

“Right! But one never sees or hears of instances.”

“I’ll tell you of one,” said Sara. “I was reading in old Vasari’s *Lives of the Painters* the other day, and I found some particulars of Leonardo da Vinci which are to the point. Your conversation with Arno last evening reminded me of them. Shall I read you what is said?”

She took a volume from her shelf of books bearing on Art, and opened at a page in which lay a little red silk mark :

“‘Being an excellent geometrician, he not only worked in sculpture, but in architecture, likewise he prepared various designs for ground-plans and the construction of entire buildings——’”

“Ah, architecture!” interrupted the Colonel. “That might be different.”

“Now wait, most impatient Daddy! Hear Vasari further:”

“‘He too it was who, though still but a youth, first sug-

gested the formation of a canal from Pisa to Florence, by means of certain changes to be effected on the river Arno. Leonardo likewise made designs for mills, pulling machines, and other engines which were to be acted on by means of water. . . . He was frequently occupied with the construction of models and the preparation of designs for the removal or perforation of mountains, to the end that they might thus be easily passed from one plain to another. By means of levers, cranes, and screws, he likewise showed how great weights might be raised or drawn ; in what manner ports and havens might be cleansed and kept in order, and how water might be obtained from the lowest deeps. From speculations of this kind he never gave himself rest, and of the results of these labours and meditations there are numberless examples in drawings, etc., dispersed among those who practise our arts.’”

“There is more about his inventions,” continued Sara. “And when you think of the ‘Monna Lisa’——”

“I am surprised,” said the Colonel.

“I am picking bits out of Vasari’s account,” said Sara. “He says: ‘Though dividing his attention’ (as a boy) ‘among pursuits so varied’ (he also played the lute and composed music and poetry), ‘Leonardo never abandoned his drawing, and employed himself much in works of relief, that being the occupation which attracted him more than any other. . . . He gave the larger portion of his time to drawing from Nature. . . . His conceptions were varied to infinity; philosophizing over natural objects; among others he set himself to investigate the properties of plants, to make observations on the heavenly bodies, to follow the movements of the planets, the variations of the moon, and the course of the sun.’”

“Wonderful man!” said the Colonel. “I suppose if he had lived in our day we should be wearing our wings by this time—an excellent thing for your father, Sara!”

“‘He also confounded his master in arithmetic, by pro-

pounding extraordinary problems—when he was a little boy—while about the same time he completely extinguished his master in painting by excelling him in the painting of an angel in a picture on which Andrea Verrocchio was engaged.’”

“That is enough, Sara,” said the Colonel. “About as much as I can digest this morning.”

“But, Daddy, you will perceive that Arno may be allowed to understand your work without any depreciation of his genius as an artist.”

“You appear to have made up your mind thoroughly about Arno, little girl.”

“I believe he will be a great man,” said Sara.

“Don’t flatter him, child; don’t spoil him by encouraging him to put too many irons in the fire. There is something in the saying, ‘Beware of the man of one book.’ He who knows and does one thing well is likely to excel in it.”

“Arno is not like anyone else, Daddy.”

“Well, dear, you have a woman’s instinct and a woman’s sympathy, the most precious gifts of your sex in the eyes of a man. You believe in your father. Why shouldn’t you believe in Arno, too? Only don’t let Robert Montgomery hear you talking about Leonardo da Vinci in connection with him.”

After this Arno did not fail to take advantage of his general invitation to Donegall Place. His evening visits were frequent, and were looked forward to and enjoyed by his friends there, making a recognized addition to their happiness. Sara’s drawing improved under his advice, and her knowledge of men and things widened with the progress of conversations on all subjects, artistic, scientific, philosophic, held between the Colonel and Arno, and in which she herself gradually took more part. It was really conversation that went on in the workshop and drawing-room, or at the supper-table in Donegall Place, rather than the inconsequent chit-chat which ordinarily passes between acquaintances who

meet for a few hours, taking the place of thoughtful mental intercourse.

One result grew out of it all, which was that Sara also began to have a private pursuit of her own of which the less were said the better. She started a sort of desultory novel with very little plot, but crowded with characters, which were as sharply delineated as the pencil sketches verging on caricature admired by Arno. Every notable person of her acquaintance had a rôle in the story, and their lengthy conversations revealed their minds, such as Sara conceived them to be. These conversations were often recorded, almost word for word, from the lips of Sir Jonah, Jane Montgomery, Durrant, Robert, Arno, the Colonel, and Mrs. Fontaine. Herminia, with her blonde beauty, was the heroine; Sara intended her either to marry Harvey Durrant or to go on the stage and become a world-famous actress. She had not made up her mind as to which, but was waiting to see what the original of her heroine would do. It was a novel that was not likely to come to any particular ending, as the people in it went their way talking, and dealing with trivial things just as people do for years in real life without dramatic arrangement of catastrophes. Such as it was, however, Sara was satisfied with her production, continuing it indefinitely, using it as a kind of diary, enjoying her own little bits of satire and feeling herself safe from criticism. She illustrated it as she went along with portraits of her characters in their various moods, all along the pages. It was indeed a very large book in manuscript, and lay open on her private desk in her own upper chamber, where nobody but Nurse Canavan or the housemaids had an opportunity of investigating it, their deficiency in literary taste being her safeguard against prying eyes from such quarters. At this time Sara had no ambition to be an author, but merely desired to pour herself forth on paper rather than with her tongue, and to ease the rush of life in her mind, overcrowded with living and interesting personalities.

Some of her characters would hardly have been flattered if

they had seen all the moods in which they were caught and fixed on the margins of Sara's pages. Sir Jonah, for instance, who had also become a frequent visitor to the Colonel, but who came in the afternoons, not being covetous of the night air between Belfast and Willows' Burn. Harvey Durrant, too, would have been startled at some of the expressions of his handsome face as it showed itself occasionally along the lines, for he had not the slightest doubt as to his power of charming the quick-witted vivacious little girl who was always somehow called "little" by her friends, though she was so tall. Harvey was another who became more and more wont to turn up at Donegall Place, at any or no particular hour, as might prove convenient to himself. He had certainly a peculiar knack of making himself agreeable when he chose to do so, and, before long, his exertions with the Colonel were rewarded by gratifying success.

"I don't think you quite sufficiently appreciate Durrant, Sara," the Colonel said. "He is really very amiable, and has a great fund of information on general subjects. He appears to be a man who can take every pleasant thing along with him as he goes, and mind his business all the same."

"Mr. Montgomery thinks highly of him," said Sara, doubtfully.

"I hope Arno is not jealous of him. I thought Harvey almost hinted at something like it yesterday, when speaking of his affection for the boy."

Sara was silent. She had become aware that there was something of a difficulty in Arno's attitude of mind with regard to Harvey. She knew Arno's sensitiveness, and the intensity of his feelings; and Harvey's air of generous good humour had been gaining on her, gradually. His attractiveness appealed to her on the lighter side of her character. His smiling looks demanded kindness, and his careless gaiety was in contrast with the serious charm of her everyday life with her father. His masculine courtesy towards herself, coming from one so much her elder, was flattering, and his faultless dress and

manners gave her a certain sense of pleasant propriety. When Harvey came to dinner (the cook and butler always insisted on an elegant and properly conventional dinner if Mr. Durrant was expected) Sara felt bound to put on her best evening dress of rose-colour, rather than the plain white frock in which Arno and her father liked to see her, not only as more suitable to the important occasion, but because Harvey had complimented her on its becomingness.

On these occasions Durrant's talk was all of the theatres, the latest novel, the past or coming races, with a report of recent army intelligence from private sources which was sure to catch the interest of the Colonel. Sometimes he would bring a novel, extolling its brilliancy, which the Colonel was too much preoccupied to read, and which opened to Sara's mind suggestions of a kind of life widely different from anything hitherto known to her. She would say to her father :

“I do not quite like this story. The people in it must be altogether different from us.”

“The world is a big place, Sara. It will enlarge your experience to hear about the others.”

“It is very exciting, but people ought to try to be good.”

“Perhaps they do. Evil is in the world, however, say what we will about it. Fortunately we are able to keep out of it. I feel sure that Harvey would not give you a book to read that could do you harm.”

Sara said no more, but one of her keen instincts led her to abstain from pressing the book on the Colonel, for his enjoyment, while she returned to Vasari and the painters, also re-reading the history of Arkwright, and of other machinery-makers and improvers of English and Irish cotton-spinning and flax-spinning.

“I do not like it,” she said in more downright fashion to Harvey when her opinion of the novel was required.

“Why?” he asked, smiling, amused at her air of decision.

But Sara was dumb. She had nothing further to say on the subject, and Harvey was piqued, interested, more in her

silence than if she had written a review of the novel for his benefit.

At this time she began to go to the theatre occasionally as one of a party, including the Montgomeries, arranged by Harvey, and on one of these occasions he said something to her apropos of the play which did not please her. It returned to her mind during the night, and she was still more sure that she did not like it. Arno's pale face and earnest eyes rose before her. He would never have said a thing like that. Yet, undoubtedly, Harvey was amusing and attractive.

Chapter XVII

Willows' Burn

It was not easy to prevail on Colonel Stevenson to quit his workshop and wheel himself into anyone else's dining-room, but sometimes Sir Jonah, as an old friend, prevailed, and on such occasions there was a party of four at Willows' Burn, Sara and her father, Harvey Durrant and the host. Sir Jonah was proud of the pictures for which he had paid noble sums, as assured of their distinction and value; but apart from this he knew little about them, and desired to know nothing more than their maintained or augmented monetary worth in the market. When Sara began to examine them, asking questions, she ran a serious risk of losing favour in his estimation.

"Why trouble yourself with these unnecessary matters?" he said. "I have never done so. The pictures are valuable stock, though the men who painted them are forgotten."

"Are they forgotten?" asked Sara with eyes opening wide. "I thought you said that this was an Andrea del Sarto."

"Sarto, Sarto. So I did," said Sir Jonah. "Sarto, I am told, is the Italian for tailor. I suppose if you were to read up the fellow's family history you would not know much more than that he was a tailor's son. These clever fellows raise themselves by their talents, and we are the gainers when we can invest our money safely in their works, and find them at the same time decorative on our walls."

"But, Sir Jonah—you do not mean— If Arno were here he would tell you——"

Cousin Sara

"I dare say he would," said Sir Jonah with a slight sneer. "I don't like that young fellow. He is full of a silent assumption of superiority very offensive to his elders. I don't doubt he thinks he could teach me a quantity of things. Better for him to mind his desk and stool at Montgomery's."

Sara was silent from astonishment. She had not fathomed before the depths of vulgar ignorance compatible with great possessions, including the ownership of the works of master minds. She had believed that to have and to hold a Raffaële, a Luini, a Titian, a Lucca Signorelli, a Perugino, implied a certain knowledge of, and feeling for the men and their genius acquired by the person who had paid great sums to gather them together on his walls.

Harvey, standing by, noticed the change in Sara's countenance. "Arno is young," he said apologetically. "And, besides, he is an Italian. He naturally feels about everything concerning his own countrymen."

"Arno is an artistic genius himself," said Sara rashly, forgetting that her friend might be more injured than benefited by such a statement.

"He poses a little in that way, I confess," said Harvey.

"I shouldn't wonder if he annoys Montgomery with his balderdash. I don't want him here, so you needn't be trying to foist him on me, Durrant," said Sir Jonah.

"Arno wouldn't allow it," cried Sara. "He has an independent spirit."

She controlled herself and said no more, with a growing fear that her enthusiastic words regarding Arno's true character would scarcely win him favour with the men who were listening to her. While they so freely discounted her words, however, they admired herself in her championship of the absent, noticing, each in his own way, the sudden flash in her eyes, and the sweet rush of colour into her cheeks.

Sir Jonah was becoming sure that Sara was an original girl who would amuse and interest him more and more, as circumstances permitted, besides having, with her other

gifts, a rare daughterly instinct tending to make her a comfortable companion for her elders; while Harvey beheld in her a pleasant contrast to Herminia, whose blonde beauty was insipid by comparison.

"Come, come," said the Colonel, arriving at the spot in his chair. "I can have no disparagement of Arno. He is a fine lad, and I find a great deal in him."

"Too much, perhaps," sneered Sir Jonah.

"Give him fair play," said the Colonel. "I bet if you ask him out here one evening you will alter your view of him."

"Perhaps he would not come," said Sara with her chin in the air.

Sir Jonah laughed. "We will give his high-mightiness a chance, however," he said. "Let us invite him to dinner, if Sara, who has him under her wing, will permit it."

"He is our friend," said Sara, looking at her father, "and we know him better than others know him."

Harvey's face had become clouded.

"I am not sure that he will improve your digestion at that dinner, sir," he said to Sir Jonah.

"A very bad joke, sir," said Sir Jonah, who was touchy on the subject of his gout, and its advised treatment by diet, which he refused to observe. "I am going to have Warrender here if I please, without interference from you, sir."

Harvey smiled and recovered his good humour. He was not accustomed to resent Sir Jonah's snubs, or to thwart him in any way, even while disliking the turn the conversation had taken.

"Arno's a lucky fellow to have such a champion," he said to Sara afterwards. "If I were under criticism, I wonder if you would defend me as warmly."

"That would depend on whether you deserved it or not," said Sara laughing.

Arno received his invitation with great surprise, and put it down to Harvey's desire to make amends for whatever injury he might have done him through his silence about

the fire. Robert Montgomery ascribed it to the same cause when giving permission for the visit, having really no objection to the lad's enjoyments so long as he was punctual at his desk in the mornings, and last to leave the office after the six o'clock bell. In exacting this attention to business he felt that he was only doing justice to the son of his dead friend. It was a different case from that of Harvey, who was older by some years, and who was the protégé of Sir Jonah. If his rich friend Cunnygham chose to make Durrant his heir, the future owner of such wealth would not be in need of a position as partner in Montgomery's Mills. But, failing a trusted position under himself, what prospect in life was there for Arno?

So one evening Arno took his place at Sir Jonah's dinner table, in company with the Stevensons and Durrant. He was shy and silent during dinner, his evening clothes looked somewhat shabby, and he had rather outgrown them. In dress and manner he was not to be compared with the exquisite and agreeable Harvey, who was in high spirits, as assured that the feeling of the party was with him in an irresistible sense of his superiority over the dull and serious youth at the other side of the board. Arno was, in fact, absorbed in an imaginary portrait of Sir Jonah into which Rembrandt would have thrown all the cunning and sarcasm with a certain substratum of undeveloped better human feeling, to be discerned in the hard-lined visage of the baronet. Catching the face in an accidental light, Arno was seized by an unexpected revelation, and, unconscious of whether he was eating beef, pheasant, or venison, he was lost in his dream until the meal was almost over.

Rousing himself at last, he was aware of Sara sitting opposite to him in her white frock, with her bright eyes fixed on him with a little anxiety. Immediately he perceived his own abstraction and lapse of good manners, and looked from one to another at the table, wishing to take part in the conversation. The subject had escaped him, however, and could not be picked up in a moment, and abashed at his own awkwardness, he retired again into his state of apparent apathy.

But after dinner his hour was to come.

Sir Jonah, with a meaning glance at Sara, proposed a visit to the picture gallery. His look seemed to say that Arno having proved his stupidity at the table was now about to show himself a "duffer" on his own ground in the matter of the pictures.

Sara longed to give her friend a hint, but her instinct told her that it was better to leave him to his own inspirations. Nor would it have been easy to have a word with him, as he dropped behind her wrapped in his dream, not even jealous of Durrant, nor the reverse, unaware of the reason why Sara was wearing her white frock instead of the rose-coloured raiment approved by Harvey, who was taking her to the gallery.

This was a long lofty room, lighted from the top, and had been specially built by Sir Jonah for the pictures which he had collected as representing his wealth and his knowledge of a correct method of disposing of a part of it. The walls were well lined with paintings, chiefly excellent, long luxurious seats were placed down the middle of the parquet floor strewn with rugs. A few rare marbles were disposed here and there among palms and urns of flowers. Sir Jonah had a right to be proud of his gallery, and it was a right which he exercised to the fullest extent.

Arno, entering, started, and suddenly became animated as with new life. He moved eagerly from picture to picture, studying and searching for the best. Sir Jonah followed him with curiosity, catalogue in hand, being indeed so little acquainted with these treasures of his that he needed to be constantly informed afresh of the names of the artists and the subjects of their works.

With the catalogue in hand he was master of the situation, and prepared to amuse himself and his guests with the hollowness of the pretensions of Arno as a would-be artist and critic.

"Now, my friend," he said, "you are an authority in these matters. What do you think of this Francia?"

Arno looked up quickly. "It is not a Francia, Sir Jonah. It is a Botticelli."

Sir Jonah laughed. "You are mistaken, my friend. We know a Botticelli when we see it. This is an *Adoration of the Magi*—subject for Francia rather than your man."

"But it is Botticelli," cried Arno, his eyes glowing, "and what is more, I know the history of the picture. Where did you get it, Sir Jonah? The Florentine editors have mourned for its withdrawal from Italy."

"Come, come! This is interesting. We are waiting for the history."

The others of the party had drawn near, struck by the change in Arno, who stood, head up, eyes shining, arm extended, disputing with Sir Jonah.

"It was painted for the Church of Santa Maria Novella. This figure is the portrait of Cosimo dei Medici, the most animated and faithful likeness known to exist of him. Here again is the portrait of Giuliano dei Medici, father of Pope Clement VII. Another King, here, is Giovanni, the son of Cosimo. I give you this on the word of Vasari."

"Who is Vasari?"

"Old Vasari, who wrote the lives of the painters. Oh, I have known about the loss of this picture from Florence. It has been thought to have found its way to the Uffizi Gallery, but I think you have got it. I do not believe it is a copy."

"No, sir; no copies for me. I have it on the word of the agent who buys for me that all my pictures are originals."

"I believe you, Sir Jonah. Oh, it is an original. Nobody but dear old Sandro could give it just that air."

"Dear old Sandro! I suppose you have had lessons from him, eh?"

"I wish I had," said Arno, with a laugh so boyish and ringing that the caustic old baronet smiled with the Stevensons to hear it. "I was born a little too late. But you have got a very wonderful treasure, sir. I will get you a history of the picture if you wish."

In spite of the frown with which he tried to cover his pleasure, Sir Jonah was elated at the news of the unique value of

this picture. He followed Arno around the gallery apparently with as much distrust and indifference as before, but hoping to find further increase of the value of his property and flattery of his pride through the instrumentality of the youth whose intelligence in matters of Art he had despised. Had Arno lowered the prestige of the gallery, doubtless Sir Jonah would have continued to scorn him, but a "boom" of his possessions in hearing of his visitors was irresistible as testimony to the genuineness of knowledge and the accuracy of criticism.

Arno made no further startling discoveries, but about almost every picture of importance he had a story to tell or some information to give. His allusion to Kings and Popes and princes with regard to their esteem for the Masters of Art had in themselves a charm for the baronet, who felt himself thus at one with the great ones of the earth, and the more willing to be made acquainted with these picture-painters as men who had been favourites in Courts. The stories of the early struggles of their genius, of how one was apprenticed to a pastry-cook and first distinguished himself as an artist by carving a lion in butter for the decoration of a banqueting table, of how another began life in a goldsmith's workshop, designing models for figures of precious metals,—of such particulars Sir Jonah did not want to hear. Give him a Master ready-made, crowned with laurels, sitting at an emperor's feast and more honoured than the princes surrounding him. Such lives as these he acknowledged to be worth living, and the purchase of their works by a magnate of the superior business of ship-building was even a more noble act of patronage than he had hitherto understood it to be. When all was over it was evident to the observant friends who had also followed Arno in his walk round the gallery that his position in Sir Jonah's estimation was very much altered, and that this was not likely to be the last of his visits to Willows' Burn.

Chapter XVIII

“Cunning is an Ugly Word”

ARNO'S satisfaction with this visit lay in the fact that it had brought him again into contact with works of the great Masters whose spirits had been the friends of his early boyhood. He was still more pleased with the result when he found himself made welcome to return to the gallery at Willows' Burn whenever he felt inclined, and to relate to Sir Jonah the many incidents in the lives of the painters, as well as stories and legends concerning them with which his memory or reading supplied him. Sir Jonah had, it seemed, discovered a new interest in life. He was amused at Arno's enthusiasm, which also flattered him in his own position as a patron of the Arts. Though not a reader of books, he was the owner of a good library, without which his establishment would not have been complete, and it gave him another agreeable surprise when Arno further convicted him of importance by placing open in his hands volumes from his own shelves which informed him as to the value of his possessions, and enabled him to talk of their relative merits like a connoisseur.

Robert Montgomery was on the whole gratified to hear of the good impression made by Arno on his friend, and mentioned it to Harvey.

“Yes, yes,” said Durrant, hesitatingly, “it is pleasant to see Sir Jonah amused and Warrender enjoying himself.”

“But?” said Montgomery. “There is a ‘but’ in your tone of voice.”

“Well, to be frank, I must say I fear this new turn of things at Willows’ Burn will only upset Arno. It encourages his madness about Art, and leads to increasing dreaminess and abstraction in business hours. Then Sir Jonah (this is strictly between ourselves, Mr. Montgomery), though so good to me, is in general a whimsical and hardly a generous man to deal with. He will foster his most dangerous qualities in Arno, and may cast him off at a moment’s notice.”

Harvey was to some extent right in this judgment, but neither he nor Robert questioned as to the primary element in his motive for the utterance.

“As to casting him off,” said Robert testily, “I don’t see where that can come in. He has not undertaken to do anything for the lad, whose fortunes are my affair. But if he distracts his mind from business——”

“That is just it,” said Harvey deprecatingly, “but one must hope for the best. There is another thing which one hardly likes to suggest—but if Arno were to learn expensive tastes——”

“There I don’t follow you,” said Robert. “I can’t see Warrender likely to err on that side. The girls were just saying that he might really get himself a new suit of evening clothes.”

“Artists’ materials are expensive, and books are more so. But really, Mr. Montgomery, I have no intention of lowering Arno in anyone’s estimation, least of all in yours. It was you who broached the subject, sir.”

“I have always found you to lean the other way,” said Robert, and yet the conversation left him despoiled of the agreeable impression as to Sir Jonah’s approval of Arno with which he had started it.

After this talk, held while walking up the avenue by the mill-race, Durrant watched his employer take the turn towards the main river and cross the long, narrow metal bridge which was the private approach to the residence of Bleachgreens. Then he retraced his steps to the mills. The employé

leaving work for the evening, meeting him, touched their hats. Durrant was already looked on as one of the principals of the works, and yet he was beginning to feel his position rather unsatisfactory. It was true that he knew Sir Jonah to be whimsical as a patron, and he had never yet said a word to give assurance to anyone that he intended to make Harvey's establishment in life a serious consideration, still less to acknowledge him as the heir to his property. The allowance he made to his protégé was becoming less and less adequate in the young man's eyes as his peculiar tastes and habits developed and strengthened, and the rooms at the mills were becoming irksome to him in proportion to the growth of his desire for a handsomer and more convenient way of living.

Returning to those rooms now, Harvey looked round them with more than usual disgust. What if he had yet to spend years in a place like this? In case Sir Jonah should make a favourite of another than himself and dismiss him, Durrant, from the position he had hitherto held in the old man's good graces, and suppose, as following such a development, Montgomery were to find that, what with his own sons and Arno, he did not need to take another partner into the business, where, then, were the prospect of anything but a life of subordination for himself, thought Harvey, despite all the hopes that had shone on him? It was obvious that, notwithstanding his occasional dissatisfaction with Arno, Robert held on obstinately to his idea of a duty to be discharged to the son of a dead friend, and it was neither safe nor pleasant to say a word that might undermine the youth in his estimation.

Impatient with these reflections, which rushed on him, Harvey pulled up the dusty blinds to make much of the remaining light, and sat down at the window with the evening papers. They were chiefly sporting papers, and Harvey scanned the lists of favourite horses and made notes in his betting book. A late unexpected loss had occasioned him much inconvenience, and he was hoping to amend matters

by some fresh, happy hit. He had usually been fortunate in his “investments” on these lines, and believed in his own lucky star.

“But for this little private source of income,” thought Harvey as he made his notes, “I wonder what would become of my few pleasures and amusements!”

And then he put the keys of the office in his pocket, and went out and took the train to town, perhaps to return in the small hours of the night by a car bringing him to the top of the avenue, or maybe by the earliest train in the morning.

On this particular evening he was going to dine with the Stevensons, and found Sara and the Colonel eager to discuss Arno’s success as Sir Jonah’s guest at Willows’ Burn. But Sara wore the pink frock, having indulgently forgotten the slight offence she had once taken from a word or two of Harvey’s. Durrant’s welcome was all that could be desired, and in reaction from his despondent mood, he poured forth unlimited praise of Arno’s artistic talents.

“If he had lived in the days of the Medici I do not doubt that he would have equalled any of those glorified personages of his worship,” said Durrant. “He would have been a pupil of his Botticelli, and Lorenzo would have made a hero of him. Flax-spinning and yarn-beetling are rather a come-down for one who dreams of such magnificence. Don’t you think so, Miss Stevenson?”

“No,” said Sara. “Arno does not care about things of that kind.”

“He doesn’t care much for the office,” said Harvey, with an air of reluctance and reserve.

“I think he fulfils his duty,” said the Colonel gravely. “I believe he means to do so.”

“I would not gainsay that for the world,” said Harvey. “I am only hoping that he may not ‘fall between two stools,’ to use the vulgar proverb.”

“Why should he?” asked Sara quickly. “Mr. Montgomery is his friend, and Arno is steady at the work he undertakes.

He is not forbidden to practise his drawing, and if it should prove——”

She glanced up and caught a piercing look from Harvey as he waited for her to complete the last sentence; and she went no further, not quite liking or understanding the look.

“Mr. Montgomery does not intend him to undertake any serious work that is not *his* work,” said Harvey. “Yet why should a great painter be lost to the world, if Arno be the genius you believe him to be?”

The words seemed to ring true, and to echo Sara’s own thought, but there was a slight something in the tone jarring to her sensitive ear. Was Harvey the warm friend to Arno he appeared to be? Her momentary doubt was reflected in her face, and Harvey made a brilliant effort to right himself in her judgment.

“It is safe, I think, to leave the dear fellow to work out his own career,” he said warmly. “With his talents and his qualities he is not likely ever to be lacking in either means or friends.”

For this speech Sara immediately gave him a grateful glance, which was both satisfying and dissatisfying to Harvey, inasmuch as it expressed less approbation of himself, personally, than gratification at his sympathy with Arno.

His liking for the Stevensons was genuine, and he was soon putting forth all his attractions to secure for himself the place of first favourite with these two friends who were so very unlike himself in their qualities, their tastes, and their aims. Their views of life, which were so different from his own, their enthusiasms, which he could not share, all by the rule of contraries attracted him to them. Instinctively he was careful to let them know as little as possible of his own way of life beyond what was obvious to them, while at the same time he desired to be admitted to their confidence, at least in the same degree as Arno. A disinterested observer might have imagined that his vanity was jealous of Arno, though his pride would not acknowledge it; but the Colonel was so

charmed with the deference of his manner and the pleasure he betrayed in listening to the yarns of a soldier's experience, that Harvey got full credit on his own showing for many single-minded virtues, besides some endearing social qualities.

This triumph of amiability was delightful to Durrant, who found his pleasure in leading two lives, one of social popularity and the other in ways on which the light was not to be turned. It was with an impulse to flatter the Colonel into a still warmer regard for him that he asked one evening to be admitted to the mysterious precincts of the workshop.

“It is only an untidy den,” said the Colonel. “We do not try the patience of our friends by inviting them into it.”

There was a certain decision in the Colonel's manner which silenced Harvey for the moment, but left him all the more anxious to see what was going on in the den and more resolved to penetrate to its recesses. Sara had betrayed to him that Arno was accustomed to spend an occasional hour with her father there, and the fact that Arno himself had never mentioned the circumstance to him piqued his curiosity and urged him to persevere in establishing himself on a footing of intimacy with the Stevensons, equal at least to that so easily accorded Warrender.

At last Durrant made a bold move to gratify his desire. He arrived one day late in the afternoon, but earlier than usual for evening hours, and was ushered into the workshop by a maid who was doing duty for the old butler in his temporary absence, and who was ignorant of the orders to admit no visitor to the master's particular sanctum.

The look of consternation on the Colonel's face as he entered did not escape Harvey, even though it was banished as quickly as possible, and he was received with the usual courtesy, tempered with a slight reserve. Sara, too, he thought, showed a little apprehension in her face as she turned to him from her desk in her own corner of the apartment, and immediately engaged him in conversation about a drawing of her

own on the easel, while her father disposed of some matters he had been engaged on, hurriedly putting his work out of sight.

"There is some secret business going on here," thought Harvey. "The favoured Arno has been initiated into the mystery, while the distrusted Harvey is left out in the cold. Here is a little future amusement for my ingenuity."

"You will excuse me, Colonel," he said, in his most winning manner, "but your maid having invited me here, I really imagined you had no longer any objection to seeing me in your interesting sanctum."

Having once effected his entrance into the workshop, Harvey soon made good his footing there by his tactful display of interest in the Colonel's occupations, and his ready acceptance of the views, little by little, put before him, as to possible improvements in machinery. By and by he found an opportunity for discovering and admiring the ingenious talent shown by the various pieces of clever mechanism which were the work of the disabled soldier's brain and hand. As a consequence of such winning sympathy, the Colonel relaxed his rule of privacy in Harvey's favour, and gave to him, also, the confidence hitherto extended only to Arno.

But the difference in constructive brain power between his two young friends was evident to the worker who shared and discussed his views and secrets with them.

"Harvey is a bright and charming fellow," he said to Sara, "and he sees the advantages of a thing you put before him. But he has no suggestion of value to make, as Arno has. The world is badly divided, says the proverb. One man need not get all the talents while another stands empty."

"Harvey is clever, too, in his way," said Sara. "I often ask myself what *is* his way. There is something in his face at times, a reserve, a pondering, that never seems to get any expression in his talk."

"I have taken that as slowness of comprehension struggling with an effort to grasp difficult things. I should not always

look on that as a sign of either power or want of power. How does it appeal to you, my astute little philosopher?”

Sara hesitated.

“Out with it Sara. Under the seal. Look on your Daddy as a father confessor.”

“It has appeared to me like something outside of our own experience. There is a word I do not like to use. Now, mind, it is only to you, Daddy. It looks like cunning,” said Sara, her colour rising.

“You blush at the uncharitableness of your own remark.”

“Yes.”

“Cunning is an ugly word, I grant you, but a little of it may mean caution, an overkeen sense of the necessity for prudence.”

“I am glad to have it explained into anything you can name,” said Sara. “I have always, or nearly always, found Harvey very agreeable.”

Chapter XIX

“The Glory and the Dream”

Two years had passed over the heads of the members of our little circle of friends when, with the coming of a hot summer, the Colonel felt a desire to visit the old haunts of his childhood in the Glens of Antrim, where he owned some property, including a house on a wooded mountainside in a fold of the Glen of the Waterfalls. The place had long been let, but now stood vacated. The easy opportunity for a change was tempting, notwithstanding the Colonel's reluctance to quit his workshop, and the migration was suddenly accomplished.

To Sara the change was enchanting. All her life she had been hearing from Kitty Canavan of the romantic beauty of the Glens, and their imagined grandeur and loveliness had made the background in her mind's eye of many a story and legend of her childhood. In later years her Italian experiences had so satisfied her craving for the beauty of Nature that the glamour of the Glens had almost faded from her memory. But now her heart leaned back to the old childish dreams of crag and waterfall, golden strand and orchard-bordered stream, and she was in a happy flutter of excitement as she packed trunks with Kitty Canavan, or boxes of books under her father's direction.

“Take Scott, by all means,” he said. “His scenes are ours, and he will people the Glens for you. As a boy I fitted his stories and characters into places of my own between the Antrim hills. But don't look for Switzerland or Italy. Empty

your mind of the Alps, and expect no vine-covered pergolas, no picturesque wayside shrines. For chestnuts we shall be lucky if we get potatoes, and the pungent odour of the turf-burning must serve you for the scent of the pine-woods. We shall not see gilded belfries or wonderful gems and pictures in roadside churches, but must bear in mind that people may pray as well within white-washed walls, even sometimes in places of worship that are not much better than consecrated barns.

“Take M’Pherson’s *Ossian*, too. I’m sorry he wasn’t straightforward about his work, but we will take the work for its own sake. We will read in the roar of the waterfall, looking up at the purple of our mountains, the character of which my nature, I confess, can assimilate better than that of the Alps. Take Wordsworth, for ‘the glory and the dream’ of my boyhood.”

So the Colonel ran on while Sara packed. Even to her he hardly admitted that he believed he had completed the invention he had so much at heart, and that he needed a change of scene and current of thought before he could accept the conclusion that it was a thing accomplished. Some details would probably need to be revised and improved on, but at present he wanted to get away from it all for a time so that he might return to it afterwards with fresh eye, and brain newly charged with a better power of accurate criticism.

The old house in the Glen of the Waterfalls was originally a pre-Cromwellian building, which had been many times part pulled down, patched, and added to in the course of two centuries.

“It *is* a funny old house, Daddy,” said Sara. “The hall and the back premises seem to be the grandparents of the drawing-room and dining-room; and the library and some of the bedrooms are evidently the great-grand-children.”

“I like all this wood panelling,” said the Colonel. “One is not so much at the mercy of badly-chosen wallpapers.”

“And we don’t want to engage in papering and painting now, instead of enjoying our liberty,” said Sara.

Nevertheless the drawing-room was fortunate in the old-fashioned paper on its walls, strewn with many coloured spring flowers, its white paint and moss-green carpet, and its sober old furniture of a long bye-gone day. Every window framed a picture of Nature's limning, the purple of the mountain, the brown and dun of the moor in shadow against faery gold and aerial blue, or suddenly alive with brilliant self-colour against a grey sky, free for the moment from wayfaring cloud-shapes.

"It is all too lovely for only two of us," said Sara, as they sat listening to the roar and tinkle of the waterfall, which made a constant murmur of music round the house, with, at intervals, the crash of a grand chord and the roll of a drum. "It is too like heaven, and we are not there yet. We need some one other human creature to share it with."

"Perhaps to destroy the heavenly impression," said the Colonel. "Just as we are, this sweetness and peace are to me unsurpassable, and I do not want them disturbed."

"A poet or an artist would not disturb them," said Sara. "Arno would not disturb them."

"Oh, you are thinking of Arno!"

"He is the only person I can think of who would not disturb you."

"Let him come as the artist only, then," said the Colonel. "I don't want him to bring any wheels or levers with him. I have left all that locked up in the workshop."

"He will be the artist only here," said Sara.

"He will not want to perforate our little mountains and trundle them into the sea, like his friend Leonardo, eh?" said the Colonel.

"He won't. I'll answer for him. May I write to him, Daddy? His holidays begin to-morrow."

"Write to him by all means; and say, 'Dear Leonardo, come with your pencil, and leave the machinery to take holiday of its own.'"

Sara wrote the letter on the spot at her father's dictation, and it went by the evening post.

Arno came “leaping,” as he wired in reply, and was whirled up the Glen on a car before one would have given him time to pack his luggage.

Away from the anxiety and irksomeness of his position at the mills, the fret of his mingled and tangled feelings towards those with whom he lived and worked there, Arno was a new creature. He rose with the lark to range the hills, and came in to breakfast glowing and sunburned, and brimful of a joy which found no noisy utterance, but filtered through his eyes and shook in his voice as he related his experiences in those mystical regions of shadow and colour, between heaven and earth, where the dawn and the sunrise had found him. The Colonel admitted to Sara that Arno neither disturbed nor bored him. For many hours of the day he was devoted to his painting, but even then he was alive to the genial presence of his friends and to the joy of their companionship. There was evidently no fear of his wanting to bore mountains, or divert the valley stream from its course, or interfere with the waves of the sea. The world was nothing to him but a world of beauty and splendour penetrated with “the light that never was on sea or land,” a light which shone also on the faces of those he loved, and who were becoming every hour more dear to him. Sara was his companion in many a sketching expedition, and in their long talks together he gave her his fullest confidence.

“How am I to go back to work at the mill after this?” he said one day, with an unusual burst of impatience. “At a weary desk all day, and then cramped up in a little room with only snatches of this kind of work just permitted on sufferance. My years are running over, and I want to be a painter pure and simple!”

“How I wish you could be!” said Sara.

“I must, I will,” said Arno. “But the means to start? How am I to manage it? That is the question. I have

been trying to save a little, but it all goes in paints and canvas."

"If you could get away to the *padre*!" said Sara.

"I'm afraid the poor old *padre* would hardly welcome me," said Arno with a little smile. "To him it would be a tragic ending of my fine prospects with Mr. Montgomery."

"I can't understand the inconsistencies of people," said Sara.

"And besides, and above all, the dear old man could not support me during the interval before I could repay him,—not without stinting himself. And I should need to be in Florence, or Rome, or——"

Arno paused, as his desires rushed on him with force.

"You might get on at once."

"I would sweep an artist's studio, clean his shoes,—anything to be there."

"There *must* be a way somehow," said Sara. The urgency of the case came vividly before her. This matter must be thought out. Could not her father advance money to start Arno in his career? How much money would it take? She knew little of her father's financial affairs. They lived modestly, and her father's only extravagance was in connection with the necessary expenses of working out his cherished inventions. If willing, as she was sure he would be, might he be able to undertake this responsibility for Arno? These thoughts and questions rose rapidly in succession before Sara while they both sat silent listening to the tinkling of a mountain stream as it oozed through the heather and drip-dropped into a tarn.

"I have sent a few little things, one now and again, to London," said Arno presently, "but none of them have sold. I am told they are too ideal. I don't know what sort of thing would be more likely to take. 'Something of common human life,' a dealer wrote to me, 'would have a better chance.'"

"Then why not try something?" said Sara. "A scene in the glen. A cottage with figures."

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“Good! Will you sit for me as a peasant maiden? and I will find a cottage.”

“Let us set out and look for one, and you can put me in after you have got it.”

The idea was carried out and the picture was begun. Arno had already many different studies of Sara in his portfolios, sketches from life snatched when they were together, or drawings made from memory in his room at the mills. But now he had leisure and opportunity to put her in a complete picture. And Sara was at the moment a happy subject for a rustic picture. At seventeen she was tall and womanly, her hair “up,” as the girls say, and her skirts “down.” In her cambric dress of apple-green and white she bloomed like a rose, and her bronze-black hair took here and there a little touch of gold as the sun penetrated the mass of her dark braids. Her sun-burned straw hat was to-day crowned with hop blossoms and to-morrow with scarlet ash-berries. To sit at the cottage door she turned up the skirt of her frock over her petticoat, put on a white apron, and looped a lawn ‘kerchief over her head and about her shoulders. She was still too much the lady, Arno protested, and obliterated the bright buckles in her shoes.

“Never mind,” said Sara, “ladies do not sit at the doors peeling potatoes. So nobody will suspect me.”

When the picture was finished the Colonel wanted to buy it, but Arno’s pride would not endure this development of his idea for making a little needful money.

“No, sir,” he said. “I will paint another for you, but this has a particular destination.”

He began another immediately—subject, “The Gardener’s Daughter” from Tennyson; model, Sara in white reaching for the roses from the doorway. While the work went on the Colonel read aloud *Rob Roy*, *The Bride of Lammermoor*, passages from *Ossian*, and many a page from other favourite authors suited to the scenery and the situation. It was a happy time, throbbing with full life, stirring with generous

hope, thrilling with faith in the fair future, days never to be forgotten by any of the three who enjoyed them in a companionship of sympathy.

But Arno's holidays came to an end, and his friends were obliged to let him go. On the morning of his last day in the Glen of the Waterfalls he climbed the mountain at daybreak, and walked on the short heather a-top facing the rising sun. Joy in the love of those he loved had braced his sensitive nature and widened his heart. He was strengthened in brain and limb, and his spirit was alight with courage. The weariness of hope deferred seemed to have fallen from him, a glorious career opened before him in the parting sun-clouds, the common-place difficulties of every-day life that had clogged his feet were burned up in the light, and he sprang forward like a roe, and shouted and sang on the wind.

"Italy and Art!" were the words that rang out where there was nobody to hear them, nothing to catch them but the rock of the echo that gave them back to him with gladness and triumph.

He had forgotten the echo, and sang out the words louder than before that he might hear them once again.

"Italy and Art!" he shouted; and the rock hummed for a moment, and then the words, "Italy and Art" were hurled forth out of its breast back to Arno.

"And Sara!" said Arno; but he said it so low that the rock did not hear him, and the word remained silent in his heart.

After he had gone the Colonel and Sara felt so lonesome without him that the glen had lost more than half its charm, and they began to think pleasantly of town, streets, and the workshop. Then came Mrs. Fontaine to the rescue, and her romantic enthusiasm for the glen, uttered to the accompaniment of her knitting needles, acted as a fresh tonic.

Her company was the pleasanter inasmuch as she kept talking about Arno. Sara as the gardener's daughter captivated her fancy, but as usual she had a lecture to give on the subject

of spoiling “that boy” with too much encouragement, before her true sentiments were allowed to come to the surface of her mind and escape by her tongue.

“I do think, George,” she said, “that the lad is a true genius, and I for one give up accounting his father’s failure as against him. I wonder could we not make up a little fund among us to start him in a career after his own heart?”

“I have been thinking of it, too,” said the Colonel.

“We should have war with Robert Montgomery.”

“After war comes peace,” said the Colonel smiling.

“We must think it out, however, and do nothing rashly. And please say nothing to Sara, or the girl’s head will be turned at once with extravagant imaginings.”

“Sara has more common-sense than you imagine,” said the Colonel, “but she believes in Arno. Perhaps that is in itself an evidence of her good sense. We elders give ourselves too much credit for wisdom which is sometimes only a niggardly prudence. I don’t mean to speak of this matter to the child, however, until I have something really hopeful and reliable to talk about.”

Meanwhile Arno had buckled to his work again at the mills, refreshed in health and spirits, and with a hope in his heart which soon, however, threatened to turn into a hungry desire for the unattainable. The glen and the sympathetic friends, the glory and the dream of Art, the fair future in the sun-clouds beyond the mountain-top, all faded away within the four walls of an ugly room under the smoke of the tall mill chimney and in the noise of the grinding machinery.

“And all for the want of a little money!” thought Arno. “Only a little money, and so much thrown away every hour, every moment, by those who have more of it than they know what to do with!”

And in this depressed mood the late autumn days found him.

Chapter XX

“What has turned my Luck”

SOON after the return home of Sara and her father they were invited to pay a visit to Bleachgreens to join in some little festivities celebrating the full development of Olive and Juliet Montgomery from the state of school-girlhood into that of young ladyhood. A little dance was planned. Jane, in her heart, called it a ball, and hoped that many personages about the county would respond to her summons and give it the importance she desired. Invitations were accepted fairly well, and all went merrily as the day drew near. Sara arrived in time to help the girls to choose their frocks and the decorations for the rooms, her father having willingly deferred the opening up of his workshop in order to allow her to enjoy this amusement.

A few days before the important evening Harvey went into Arno's room to ask for a postage stamp, and offered him the local newspaper, which Arno never read. The stamp was found, and Harvey remained for some time chatting about everything and nothing.

The subject of the coming dance was spoken of by Durrant. He was not very sure it would be a success. Mrs. Montgomery was hardly good form. She was not born to advance her daughters in society.

Arno coloured with a sense of shame. He had suffered a little from Jane, but having received many good things through her hands, he would not have thought it possible to criticise her. To hear Harvey, whom she had always petted, do so, gave him disgust.

“She is very hospitable,” he said, “and her house is handsome and comfortable. They are a happy family.”

Harvey laughed. “You are a curious, old-fashioned kind of fellow,” he said. “Well, I hope you will enjoy the ball.”

“You will do so, I am sure,” said Arno, “but I am not going.”

“What? Not invited?”

“I have been invited, and I am obliged by the kindness. But I have reasons of my own for feeling myself out of it.”

“Reasons? Not enough high Art about the matter, eh?”

Arno laughed. “Not quite that,” he said, “unless it be in the matter of one’s own appearance. The truth is, my evening clothes are a little out-grown and shabby.”

“Can’t you get some new ones?”

“No. Couldn’t very well manage it at present.”

“Isn’t there a tailor anywhere who would give you credit?”

“I don’t know. I’ve never cultivated anyone on those lines. And I’d rather not begin.”

“Then you oughtn’t to spend all your money on paint-brushes. I wouldn’t like to shut myself off from the pleasures of the world like you. And what will Jane say to you for your incivility in rejecting her hospitality?”

“She will not mind. She would rather I did not come than come badly dressed. And Mr. Montgomery would rather I stayed away than go into debt.”

“I see. You intend to remain a paragon in everybody’s eyes. But what will the young ladies think of you?”

“I am too old-fashioned, as you say, to be of any importance in their eyes. I tell you nobody would miss me,” said Arno; but at the same moment he hoped that Sara would miss him a little, even while she approved of his reasons for electing to be absent.

Harvey left him, and an hour later took the train to town, not returning to his rooms till five o’clock in the morning, when he arrived on a car at the top of the avenue to the mills, and let himself quietly into his rooms as he was very much used to doing.

In his letter-box he found papers which had arrived by the

latest post of the night before, and, lighting a lamp, he sat down to examine them.

A fierce exclamation burst from him, and he sat rigidly in his chair and stared at nothingness.

"Curse them!" he muttered. "Curse them! What has turned my luck?"

Then he spread the unwelcome communication before his eyes and studied it with bent brows. He had lost heavily on a horse he had counted on to win.

Having himself followed that course which he had recommended to Arno of obtaining on credit whatever he wanted and could not pay for, he saw himself now in a slough of pecuniary difficulty. "Luck" had so often stood his friend when things looked badly that he had grown reckless of the possibility of a change. And this had come on him at a moment when he seemed to have least reason to expect it.

A bill was coming due, and if he were not able to meet it the result must be an exposure, which would be his ruin.

"Curse you!" he cried, bringing his hand down on the name of the horse that had failed him. "I counted on you to pay this debt for me. Now, there is nothing for me but to appeal to Sir Jonah."

Having touched this point he tore the papers and walked about the floor, reviewing his chances of obtaining the required relief from his uncertain patron. What plausible story could he invent? Was it probable that he could hit on any imaginary state of things likely to touch the cynical old man without risk, without almost certainty of being found out?

There was nothing to be done but to make the attempt, and the next evening Harvey presented himself at Willows' Burn. The old gentleman was walking about his gardens in the dusk, marking the fall of the leaves, and the tarnished glory of late flowers vainly resisting the inevitable doom of decay.

"So we go," he said, "so we go. Every mother's babe of us. My turn will only be a little sooner than yours, my young friend, for all the difference between us now."

“The difference is not so great, Sir Jonah,” said Harvey.
“You are a young man still, and indeed you look it.”

“Humph!” said Sir Jonah. “I believe you’re right. I haven’t cut my wisdom teeth yet.”

Harvey found it difficult to proceed, but having been invited to stay for dinner (the old man was glad enough to have his loneliness relieved on any terms), he contrived to bring the case he had prepared under the notice of Sir Jonah.

“It is the case of a friend in trouble,” he said pathetically, “a dear friend of my boyhood in the days before I had the happiness of meeting with Sir Jonah Cunnygham.”

Sir Jonah bowed, and the corners of his mouth were in shadow as he bent over the cracking of his walnuts.

“It is a matter of a couple of hundred pounds.”

“A mere trifle!” said Sir Jonah.

“To you, sir, perhaps—but to my friend——”

Sir Jonah finished his walnuts and sat up.

“There is no friend to a man like you so near and so dear as friend self,” he said, “and therefore the deserving object of your tender sympathy is easily identified.”

Harvey bit his lip and held his breath.

“I protest, sir.”

“No, sir, don’t protest. Don’t over-exert your ingenuity. Now, sir, I have made you an allowance which I consider ample for a young man in your very advantageous position, and I am not going to increase it. No more do I promise to continue it. I may do so, or I may not do so, according as you conduct yourself. If you have got yourself into debt, then work yourself out of it by denying yourself and saving the result cash for your creditor.”

“I did not say——” began Harvey.

“No, sir, you did not say. It might have been better if you had said. But now you need say no more. You may be in time to catch the last train to Bleachgreens.”

“Hardly, Sir Jonah,” said Harvey, looking at his watch.

Sir Jonah did not take the hint, and no invitation to stay the night followed.

"In any case, I should not like to leave you under such a misunderstanding. I have no idea of asking you to increase my allowance. I am keenly alive to your bounty in giving me one at all. This would only have been a matter of a loan ; but I will say no more about it. I must try in some other way to come to the relief of my friend in whose existence you do not appear to believe. You will, I am sure, excuse me for making the attempt to enlist your sympathies."

"How are you going to get back to Bleachgreens?" asked the old man with a stony look on his face.

"Oh, I shall take a car."

"Have you money to pay a car."

"Certainly," said Harvey with dignity.

"I am glad to hear it. Don't spend the last of your quarter's allowance before the next comes in. Always have a shilling or two in your pocket."

"Excellent advice," said Harvey.

"Well, then," said Sir Jonah, his brows relaxing, "as you can afford to hire that car, come and take a turn round the gardens. I needn't ask you to look at the pictures. You know as little about them as I do myself."

"My mind, like your own, sir, is occupied with the things of trade, which to me is all-important. Art is a mere plaything, a toy in comparison with it."

"Humph!" said Sir Jonah. "Some people see more than that in it, but of course they must be fools. As you say, however, a cobbler is a cobbler, and ought to stick to his last."

The turn in the gardens ended at the gates of Willows' Burn, outside of which Harvey quickly found himself saying good-night to his host. He was soon striding along the road to town, and if hedges had ears, even late autumn hedges red with haws and "buckies," they might have heard him making statements about his patron which would not have raised their

master's character in the estimation of those guardians of his fields.

He did not immediately take a car to Bleachgreens, but proceeded to the rooms of a man who was the frequent companion of his amusements and sharer of his betting risks, and who was concerned in Harvey's catastrophe of the hour. Part of the money so badly needed was owing to him, and Durrant besought him to wait for his payment. But the boon companion was neither willing nor able to do so.

“Sorry I can't undertake to help you,” he said, “but I'm in a worse plight than yourself. Stay, a fellow with plenty of money is due here in five minutes for a game of cards. I'll share the chances with you. An hour's sport with a rich duffer may do something for you.”

Harvey seized his opportunity, but his “ill-luck” was still in the ascendant. He played and lost, and the car that bore him to Bleachgreens carried a miserable man. He was not to be baffled, however, and before daylight wrote to another friend who, he thought, might possibly come to his assistance.

The next evening he made an examination of all his valuables, considering whether or not he might be able to turn them into cash. He had made a little collection of curios, bits of old silver and china, some jewellery, and various “antiques” which he had picked up “for a song,” though assured that they were “worth a hatful of money.” What was he to do with them now in order to raise the sum he was in need of? He wrote to a dealer in London describing the articles in glowing language, and fixing on them approximate dates, which gave them an exaggerated value. The reply directed him to send them for inspection, and he had now some hope of averting that exposure of his most private affairs which had seemed imminent.

Chapter XXI

“He will do Something desperate”

THE day of the dance arrived, and Jane was a busy woman in the midst of her maids and her daughters directing all the little preparations which must be reserved for the last moment. The flowers must be perfectly fresh, and all those arrangements so deftly and quickly carried out in London by the florist had to be made here by the supplies of the gardener and the feminine fingers of the household.

In the midst of the bustle Mrs. Montgomery desired to send a message across the river to her husband on some trifling detail which had assumed a gigantic importance in the eyes of her fussiness.

It happened that as Sara had been called on to leave the festive workers to go on an errand to the village post-office for her father, she charged herself with the message to Robert, and on her way back presented herself unexpectedly in the master's private room at the factory.

There she found Robert busy at his desk, and Arno standing behind him waiting for his orders.

She was greeted with a friendly nod from Montgomery, who signed to her to wait. Arno's face lit up at seeing her, and she took a seat at a distance from both, reserving her message for Mr. Montgomery's leisure moment.

There was a long silence, broken only by the scratching of Robert's pen. It ceased and began again, ceased and went on once more, and at last Robert said :

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“In a moment, Sara.”

A few more scratches and the master looked up and spoke again :

“Now, then, Sara ! I suppose this is something urgent.”

“Yes,” said Sara. “Mrs. Montgomery wishes you——”

Here the door opened and an overseer came in asking for Mr. Montgomery’s immediate presence in a distant part of the mill.

The mill-owner stood up. Business must come before everything else.

“I must ask you to wait a little longer, Sara,” he said. “I will return in half-an-hour. You also wait here, Arno.”

He left the office, and Sara and Arno were alone. Arno had a number of things to say to Sara. She did not wait for him to speak, but said :

“Is it true that you are not coming to the dance ?”

“Quite true,” he said. “I thought you would know the reason. As Durrant says, I spend too much on paint-brushes to have money for new dress clothes.”

“I see. But wouldn’t they do—those you have been wearing, I mean ?”

“No, they wouldn’t. Just think of it for a moment, Sara.”

“Oh, that odious money !”

“If I had a little I shouldn’t call it odious. Neither should I buy dress clothes with it. I would shake off this drudging life and be off to Italy.”

“I know you would, and perhaps it will come. Have you heard anything more of the picture you sent to London ?”

“Nothing. Nor am I likely to hear anything.”

“You are very depressed to-day. Where are the good spirits you took with you from the glens ?”

“I suppose they went back there when they found they had to live at the mills. They didn’t like it. Couldn’t live here. At all events they left me. I’m not only depressed now, but I’m feeling desperate. I am nineteen years of age, and my youth is passing over. If I could find a little money I should bolt.”

"Don't do it that way. Have you anything new to show me?"

"Yes, if I had an opportunity."

"Might not I run upstairs with you for a moment while we are waiting?"

"I should not like to be away when Mr. Montgomery returns."

"Nor I. But he expected to be absent half-an-hour, and nothing depends on our being here all the time. Five minutes would show me a drawing. See, I have my watch."

"Well, then, five minutes only," said Arno, and they rushed up the stair to Arno's room.

A long earnest look at the sketch and a few words of delighted admiration from Sara and, with the watch in her hand, she hurried back to the office with Arno.

"You always give me new hope," he said. "You are my good angel, Sara."

"I would like to be," said Sara.

Arno went on talking of what he would do if he could only get away to enter on an artist's life; until Robert Montgomery returned at last with leisure to attend to both the young people. Sara he dismissed first, with a return message to his wife, and a smile at her urgency about a matter which seemed to him ridiculously unimportant; after which Arno received his business orders and went back to his own desk in an outer office.

The dance proved a highly satisfactory affair, and was written down a ball. Jane was triumphant in her diamonds and dress, *à la* lady mayoress, spreading a peacock's train, and breathing the incense of compliments on her pretty twin girls who promised to equal the beauty of their elder sister, on the charming frocks so becoming to their different styles, on her successful husband, her fine tall sons, her handsome house, and the perfection of all her arrangements.

Harvey Durrant was there in his most brilliant and amiable character, and was easily first among desirable partners. The



James Ewan. 1908.

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wreath of blonde hair round Herminia's handsome head had a more than usual golden glitter, and her elaborate robe seemed compact of flowers. Harvey and she were together among the first of the dancers. After he had resigned her to another partner, Sir Jonah came up to him and surveyed him with one of his caustic smiles.

“I am glad to see you have not been obliged to part with your evening coat,” he said.

“No. Things are not quite so bad as that,” replied Harvey gaily. “But you must have your little joke, Sir Jonah!”

“Glad it is only a joke,” said the old man. “I hope you have been able to come to the assistance of that distressed friend of yours. There is no knowing what one can do till one tries.”

“That is a truth well worth reflecting upon, Sir Jonah. A man in my position is very likely to lay it to heart.”

“Good. By the way, I never knew you were such an accomplished dancer. I should like to see you dancing with the young lady in the simple white dress.”

“Which young lady in white, sir? There are many in white.”

Sir Jonah nodded towards Sara, who was talking with animation to one of the cleverest men in the room.

“That is a woman, sir,” said the old man, knitting his white eyebrows. “But perhaps you, like many of your order, prefer a doll.”

Harvey laughed. “Low be it spoken, Sir Jonah, but really I don't. I thought, however, to please you by politeness towards the daughter of the house.”

“Oh, if you dance to please me I ought to be gratified,” sneered Sir Jonah. “I wonder,” he added, “if the young lady I admire would dance with me to please me, if I asked her.”

“I am sure she would—only be too proud, like any other girl in the room.”

“Humph!” said Sir Jonah. “I have forgotten my dancing shoes.”

"Let me be your substitute then," said Harvey with alacrity. "I will at once go and ask the young lady."

"And be careful of your steps, remembering that you are dancing to please me;" and the old gentleman smiled again fiercely as Durrant made a deferential gesture and a graceful movement towards carrying out the wishes of his patron.

"Not a bad-tempered fellow, at all events," growled Sir Jonah to himself as he watched Harvey smiling and bowing before a tall, light figure, and a beautiful face beaming with good health and good humour.

Sara, however, had booked partners six deep for the coming dances, but declared herself exceedingly sorry that Harvey had come too late. His recent attentions to and sympathy with her father in his works had won upon her, wiping out all instinctive distrust, and, being added to her own pleasure in his amiable society and gratifying admiration for herself, had run up quite a handsome account to his credit in her reckonings.

But though Sara danced all night in the gay excitement of her first ballroom experience, her happiness was clouded by Arno's absence, and the echo of his bitter words of the morning was in her ears, so that all the lively dance-music seemed to end in a minor key. Was he really in earnest when he spoke of running away? Had they made him only more unhappy by giving him so large a liberty and sympathy during his month of holiday in the Glen of the Waterfalls? And what if he should follow this impulse suddenly, and in a fit of desperation run away? Sara was divided in her feeling about the matter. It would seem a weak and impatient ending to his years of hopeful endurance of a life so irksome to one of his active imagination and impassioned genius; and yet Sara could not deny to herself that it would give her a kind of joy to know that he had flown like a bird from the cage and was somewhere on the wing.

On the other hand, the argument which had been so urgent with Arno himself, of duty and gratitude to the man who had

taken him by the hand and had given him education, friends, employment with a prospect of a certain kind of success in life—a success pre-eminent in the eyes of so-called “practical” people—rose up in all its strength before Sara’s eyes and forbade her to wish for that forcible breaking of the bars which Arno’s mood of extreme depression had threatened. Was there not some other way of opening the cage, a gentle hand on the door, with the willing consent of the owner of the small gilded prison? Sara had a lark at home in Donegall Place, and every day it got its lump of white sugar, its tuft of groundsel, and its stoup of crystal clear water and had its required sod of grass from the field, everything that an imprisoned lark could be in need of or desire. As the thought of the caged bird wheeled round with her to the music of the dance, Sara formed a passionate resolution to liberate that lark with her own hand, even though his song was most dear to her.

As a seemingly inconsequent growth from this resolution, she began to review in her mind her little store of jewels, and to ask herself, was there not some way in which she could help to provide Arno with the necessary means of making a fresh start in life with honour and the approval of his friends? She knew that her father had been at much expense in carrying out the plans of his inventions, and that only one or two of them, small and unimportant, had as yet proved quite successful. Aware that he looked forward to still greater expenses with regard to them, and that his never-large income had been reduced recently by losses on an old and hitherto safe investment, she paused before the thought of pressing him to undertake a new and indefinite responsibility. After all these suggestions had come forward, and one by one had retired, the question remained—would Arno’s pride accept such relief as she was longing to give him, from any of the quarters on which her eyes were turned in an inevitably narrow circle of possibilities?

When the six dances were over, Harvey was again at her side pleading his long patience and his hope to be rewarded.

"Sorry Arno is not here to-night," he said.

"Yes," said Sara.

"I suppose you know why he would not come. Pity he is so sensitive about things that really matter very little, as I know you believe."

"I should be sorry he were here feeling uncomfortable," said Sara.

"Arno is a queer fellow," said Harvey. "Most attractive to me, I admit, and I have found him affectionate towards myself. But he has always been discontented with his lot, and latterly I have feared that some day he will do something desperate."

"What do you mean?" asked Sara. "You are a friend of his, and I may ask you."

"I do not know exactly what I mean. A change has been coming over him lately, and sometimes I think some kind of crisis for him is at hand."

"You are a good deal with him," said Sara, alarmed at this confirmation of her own fears. "You take an interest in him. Will you not advise him to do nothing rash?"

"One's advice is not always taken, and Arno is proud," said Harvey. He would have added: "If only to please you, I will do my best," but the anxious air of abstraction in Sara's face gave him no encouragement.

He did not ask himself what his motive was in speaking thus of Warrender. It was chiefly, perhaps, to please Sara by showing a friend's interest in the youth whose career she had so much at heart. Harvey, if he had questioned himself, would have admitted no other reason.

When Sara went to her room in the small dark hours of the November morning, she leaned from the window and peered through the distance of the river-bordering trees, across at the mills. A light was burning in Arno's window, where he was probably at work with his pencil; or was he merely brooding over the conflict between his desires and his difficulties?

Chapter XXII

A Mystery

ROBERT MONTGOMERY had not enjoyed the little triumph of his wife's successful ball as thoroughly as might have been supposed. He seemed moody and abstracted during the evening, so much so that his son Mark asked him if he felt ill, or if anything had happened to disturb him.

"Nothing of any consequence," was Robert's answer, and he desired that he might not be further questioned.

Nevertheless something of a great deal of consequence was the matter. Mr. Montgomery could not sleep that night, and looked worried and ill at breakfast-time.

"I must say you are a most disappointing man," said Jane. "Another person in your place would congratulate his wife on everything having gone off so beautifully, and here you are looking as ill-humoured as if all the best people had snubbed us!"

"Who are the 'best people'?" asked Robert. "To me the best are those who do their duty, be they high or low, poor or prosperous."

Jane stared. "Well, it is a curious time to give a lecture on such a subject. I always thought you had as keen an appreciation of 'the best' in my sense of the word as any person I know. But there is no such thing as being assured of how to please a man."

"As to that, Jane, I am very well pleased with your efforts and the behaviour of your friends," said Robert, rising from the table.

"You have eaten no breakfast!" cried his wife.

"Your late supper is perhaps to blame," said Robert as he left the room. But every one felt that something unusual had occurred to occasion him disturbance.

In his private office he sat for some time in a state of abstraction with a look of great concern becoming gradually more deeply imprinted on his face. Rousing himself, he made a careful examination of some drawers and pigeon-holes in search of something which he did not find. Then he relapsed into thought again. At last, as with an effort, he touched his bell and desired the answering clerk to send him Mr. Warrender.

"I am sorry to say I have to speak to you about a serious matter, Arno," he said. "When you were here with me yesterday afternoon I left you suddenly. You were standing beside me. Did you notice anything on my desk besides the usual papers and writing materials?"

"Yes," said Arno, "there was a bag of sovereigns lying where you have just now placed the letter-weight."

"True. How did you know that the bag contained sovereigns?"

"I have seen it before, sir, of course, when you were about to pay some of the men."

"Exactly. There was a sum of one hundred pounds in that bag. After you had left me yesterday afternoon I found that it had disappeared. Now, can you tell me if any person came into the room in my absence—if anyone was there during my absence except yourself and Sara Stevenson?"

"I did not see anyone else come into the room."

"Would it have been possible for anyone else to come in without your observation?"

"No, sir. But stay. Sara and I went up to my room for five minutes to look at a sketch. We were away only five minutes by her watch."

Robert gave him a long piercing look.

"Do you believe you have really lost the money, sir?" said Arno anxiously.

"Undoubtedly I have lost it. Unless the person who abstracted it will return it to me."

Arno was silent, pained and sympathizing. "Is there—do you know of any one who could be supposed to have taken the money?"

"Do you?"

"I do not, sir. It is very shocking. Are you quite sure you did not put it away somewhere?"

"Am I quite sure that I am alive?" said Robert testily.

"You missed it on your return to the office while Sara and I were there?"

"Not until you were both gone. After I had given you the orders you were waiting for and sent you away I turned to look for the bag of sovereigns and it was gone."

Arno stood reflecting and troubled. Lifting his eyes suddenly and glancing at Montgomery he met a look fixed on him which made him flush all over his brows and then turn pale.

"Mr. Montgomery!" he cried, "you don't think—you don't suspect——"

"I am not saying that I suspect any one," said Robert, "but there is one simple fact to be considered. The gold was here when I left the office, and it was not here when I came back. I think that as the only person in the place during my absence the matter is one that ought to concern you, at least as much as it does me."

"So it does, sir. It is a misfortune to both of us, but far more to me than to you. You have plenty of money, Mr. Montgomery, but a man has only one character to lose."

Robert nodded.

"One character to lose and one conscience to stain," said Arno. "There is no comparison between my share in this catastrophe and yours—unless the thief can be found."

Robert looked at him again long and penetratingly, and acknowledged to himself that the youth appeared genuinely distressed.

"Well, my boy," he said. "I am extremely sorry to be

obliged to speak to you like this. Let us keep our eyes open, and, as far as we can, sift this matter to the bottom. The loss of the money would not affect me half as much as loss of faith in any one whom I had trusted. If I could persuade myself that mice or rats could eat a bag of sovereigns, gold and canvas and all, I would make them a present of the feast, and only guard against the return of so inconveniently festive an anniversary. But——. However, we will say no more at present on that subject. The question for the moment must be—could any one have had access to my private room during the five minutes in which you say you and Sara were absent from it?"

Mr. Montgomery then turned abruptly to his desk, and Arno, feeling that he was dismissed, left the room slowly, with a vague sense of calamity, unable to make up his mind whether he was suspected or not, but sick from the very suggestion.

After he had gone Robert summoned his two sons and Harvey to a consultation on the matter of the disappearance of the bag of sovereigns, and scanned anxiously the shocked faces of the three young men as they listened to the story.

"Now," he said, "you can help me by your evidence as to the possibility of the entrance of an outsider to this room, which is approached only by the outer office in which you are all accustomed to work. Can you remember four o'clock on yesterday afternoon? Who was in the outer office?"

"I was there," said Mark, "and also good old Slocum, the oldest and trustiest servant in the establishment. Hugh had gone across to the outer mill-yard, and was not back till five."

"I remember seeing him there," said Robert.

"And Harvey had just gone to town on business of the firm."

"I travelled by the four-thirty train," said Harvey. "I'm sorry I am not able to give testimony of what may have occurred after I had gone."

"And no stranger came into the place?" said Robert, turning to Mark.

"Certainly not."

Robert's face darkened.

"So it comes to this, that no one was in the room between the moment when I placed the bag on my desk and that of my return to the spot, except Arno. I don't mind so much about the money, but I am sorry for his father's son."

"You do not suspect Arno, father?" said Mark with a face of consternation.

"What do you expect me to think?" asked Robert angrily.

"Nothing against Arno, at all events," said Harvey eagerly.

"It is utterly impossible," said Hugh.

"Then do you intend to accuse Sara Stevenson?" said Robert. "She was the only other person in the office during the interval in question."

"Nonsense!" said Mark impatiently. "I beg your pardon, sir, but it is quite ridiculous."

Robert was losing patience. He was conscious of having weighed the matter in painful silence, also keenly aware of the bitterness of suspicion, and now the tone of almost reproach from these young men seemed stupid and unjust, and the affair began to cease being felt as a blow to the heart and to get on his nerves, which were constitutionally irritable.

"You are all very fine in the attitude you take," he said, "but you are not practical. Are you, Mark, or is Slocum prepared to have it assumed that you, either or both of you, committed this theft? You and Sara must divide the guilt between you if Arno is to be exonerated."

"I am willing to take it all on myself," said Mark, "rather than put it on Arno."

"Tush!" said his father, "you are talking like a quixotic fool. Let us have commonsense if we are to have no other light on the subject."

"I am trying to be practical," said Mark. "Let us not forget that there is a second, though an unused door into your office, father."

"Which is always kept locked, and the key in my secret drawer," said Robert. "Your suggestion is not a very brilliant one."

"Any suggestion at such a time may be made, I think, sir," said Mark firmly. "With all respect to you, and in all sympathy with your natural distress of mind, I intend to follow up this one."

"Do so," said Robert, "if it interests you to explore an impossibility. Meanwhile let Hugh and Harvey return to their business, and send Slocum here. You, Mark, will remain till we hear what he has to say in the matter."

Harvey and Hugh departed, as directed, and Slocum, an old man with bushy eyebrows and stooped shoulders, made his appearance with his pen behind his wrinkled ear.

"I have sent for you on a serious matter, Slocum," said Robert. "Money has been abstracted from my desk, and I want your opinion——"

The old man stood looking earnestly at his employer, his face expressing first shock and concern, then incredulity.

"It can't be, sir," he said. "Nobody comes in here, except through our office—unless there has been a burglary at night."

"Nothing of the kind. The money was taken some time within a known hour of yesterday, presumably during my absence from this room between four and five o'clock in the afternoon."

"That is quite impossible, Mr. Montgomery."

"I'm glad you think so, Slocum, but we have the fact to deal with."

Robert then elicited from the old clerk evidence corroborative of the account of the younger men as to the persons present in the office during the hour in question.

"Now, I want to ask you about the second door to this room. Is it possible that the thief could have made his approach by it?"

"Why, sir, it hasn't been opened, to my knowledge, for many years, neither it nor the little passage that leads to it. And sure, sir, you know you have the key in your own possession. Nobody could get in by it unless they broke it open."

"Will you kindly examine it, and see if it has been tampered with."

An examination of the door was then made, which, with all its blank features, its hinges that looked like immovable fixtures, seemed to declare itself innocent of any complicity in the robbery.

"Now, Slocum, you are perfectly sure that none of you three left your seats in the outer office during that hour?"

"Stay, sir. Something comes to my mind, though nothing of consequence. We did, all of us, leave our seats for about a minute to look out of the window into the yard. Mr. Hugh had been saying that the men were careless in packing the carts with the yarn, and Mr. Mark or Mr. Durrant, I don't remember which, suggested that they were then at the work, and we might take a look out and see how they were doing it."

"And you all rose up and went to the window?"

"Yes, sir."

"I had quite forgotten it," said Mark. "But it could not in any way bear on the matter."

"How long did you remain at the window looking down on the yard?"

"Only about a minute, sir. We saw that the packing was going on all right. The men had profited by Mr. Hugh's reproof, I suppose, but we saw nothing out of order."

"And you returned immediately to your desks?"

"Yes, sir."

"Your backs were not turned long enough to admit of a thief passing through your room into mine, committing the theft, and returning again without your knowledge?"

"Certainly not, sir."

"You remember seeing Miss Stevenson come through the office and pass in here at the time when Mr. Warrender was engaged with me?"

"Yes, sir; I saw the young lady go in."

"You saw her go out afterwards with Mr. Warrender during my absence, and return with him?"

"I did, sir."

"How long were they absent?"

"About five minutes, sir. Not more."

"That will do for the present, I think, Slocum. The affair is a mystery until we can see further."

"I hope it will be cleared up, sir. I have been nigh fifty years in the house, and never, neither in your father's time nor your own, was there such a happening as this."

"Just so, Slocum. But we have never any assurance that the unknown and unexpected will not happen."

The old clerk went slowly and sorrowfully from the office. The facts of the case were clearly present to his mind. He had a liking for young Warrender, in whom he felt the interest which the old may feel in the young, in whose growing experience they see reproduced something like the difficulties of their own early days. It was the habit of his nature to be obstinately incredulous of anything that contradicted the assurance of his instincts, and to his practical mind Robert's story had all the air of the impossible.

"Depend on it," he said to Mark as he took the pen from behind his ear, put on his spectacles, and fixed his eyes on the figures in his ledger, "your father will discover that he put the money aside somewhere in absence of mind, and he will be sure to find it."

Nothing further was said about the matter then, Mr. Montgomery having commanded silence with the hope that time might bring some further light. At private moments he searched and researched all possible receptacles in his office, anxious to convict himself of absence of mind and infirmity of memory. Meanwhile things went on as usual in the mills, except for a certain cloud that hung over the men as they sat at their desks in the office. No one was surprised that Arno should suffer from unusual depression, and all felt thankful for Harvey Durrant's gift of keeping up the failing spirits of others by the unflagging liveliness of his own.

Chapter XXIII

Under a Cloud

THE only evidence that Arno was under displeasure lay in the fact that he was not invited to Bleachgreens across the river, during the remainder of the Stevensons' visit. Sara noted his absence, and took it as a suggestion that the depression as to his prospects was growing upon him, and it gave her an uneasiness which instinctively she endeavoured to hide, lest she should injure him in the eyes of his employer and friends. A good share of her joy in the return home with her father to settle in their own happy haunts for the winter arose from the expectation of seeing Arno there occasionally as of old, with more freedom than at Bleachgreens. The weeks passed on, however, and Arno, though he had been pressed by the Colonel to resume his old habit of evening visiting at Donegall Place, still did not appear.

"Perhaps he is growing tired of us," said the Colonel. "Arno is becoming a man, and sometimes a young man will begin to smile at the simple pleasures he enjoyed while he felt like a boy. Later there is a healthy readjustment of feeling. We must give him time to grow."

"I don't think that is the state of the case," said Sara. "Arno looks on us as his dearest friends, apart from mere pleasure or amusement. He would not suddenly drop us out of his life, which is not a happy one."

"Well, I should be glad to see him. I want his opinion on

a part of this invention of mine. I am not quite satisfied with it yet."

"Harvey Durrant is delighted with it," said Sara.

"Harvey is a good fellow," said the Colonel, "but he knows nothing about it. He is, however, perhaps at a more steady age for making friendships. Arno is in a transition state. If he were to become attracted to one of the Montgomery girls just returned from school, it might change even his ardour for Art, and we might find him buckling to a career of hum-drum prosperity at the mills."

Sara started and looked at her father. "Olive or Juliet?" she said.

The Colonel returned her gaze with a smile.

"Whichever you please," he said. "If he be satisfied with either we must be disappointed in him. But 'put not your trust in princes,' nor yet in geniuses."

"Olive and Juliet are pretty girls," said Sara. "If I were Arno I should not know which to choose."

"I should choose neither," said the Colonel; "but then I am not a young man of nineteen, and I have a daughter who spoils my taste for other women."

Another interval elapsed, and Arno still excused himself to his friends at Donegall Place, and spent his evenings miserably in his room at the mill. The disgrace into which he had fallen had deepened, losing its first vague outlines and taking the colour of reality. The money had not been found, nor had any inquiries or investigations resulted in the slightest ray of further light on the discovery of the thief or the manner of the robbery. Despite Robert's desire to keep the matter secret, the story was discussed in the Montgomery family. Hugh first gave a hint to his younger sisters, and after a time they whispered it to their mother, who was not a person to continue long to speak in whispers, and who taxed her husband with his weakness and folly in keeping about the place a person who could behave with such dishonesty and ingratitude.

"I should not if I were quite sure," said Robert. "Though it would pain me terribly to let him go adrift, I should feel bound to dismiss him."

"Are not the circumstances sufficient proof," demanded Jane.

"Many an innocent person has been hanged on circumstantial evidence, which will lie, persistently, with an air of truth baffling to the most acute and penetrating of judges and jurymen. It seems to me impossible that his father's son could commit such a crime. But you were always prejudiced against him, Jane."

"That is all my thanks for receiving him as I have done, and making myself a mother to him!" cried Jane, her head stirring in the first breathings of a rising storm. "I confess I thought I had enough children to bring up, a large enough household to manage, but when you forced a sulky boy on me because of an absurd sentiment, I did my part, though I knew you would live to be disappointed——"

Here Robert hastily left the room, and one by one the others of the family disappeared, leaving Jane to weather her own storm to the end, declaring on the gusts that she was a misunderstood and unappreciated wife and mother, who, notwithstanding her virtues and her devotion to them all, could obtain no sympathy whatever from either husband or children.

Harvey meanwhile was the only person who attempted to give any comfort to Arno, coming into his room of an evening and rousing him from his gloomy reflections.

"Have pluck!" he would say. "No one can feel sure about this matter, and you will live it down. I don't think that anyone believes you really did it."

"But they must feel sure I did not do it," said Arno bitterly. "I can't wait to live it down. Why don't they accuse me openly, and let me be defended in a court of justice?"

"You can't wish for such a thing. It would damage your character for ever!"

"Not if I were acquitted."

"You have no money to fee lawyers."

"I should defend myself," cried Arno. "That is allowed where counsel is not to be had."

"You feel too strongly to do it well. You would injure yourself. No, there is only one course open to you. You must bear all this patiently till it be forgotten. Robert Montgomery is a hasty man, but after his anger is over he knows how to forgive and forget."

"That is very well where a fault has been committed, but there is nothing here to be forgiven. I am the person who should have to forgive, and I do not agree with you that anyone ever forgets such an occurrence as this."

"Well, then, there is the possibility of things getting cleared up in an unexpected manner. I have said before that I believe a stranger might have made a dart into the inner office while Mark and Slocum and I were at the window. We were not counting the time, and old Slocum was excited over the packing of the yarn. Our attention was fixed on the doings in the yard. A thief who knew Robert's habits in making payments of the men might watch his opportunity."

"You think he could have darted in, snatched the bag, and escaped through the outer office while your backs were turned and your eyes on the yard?"

"Certainly. I have said so again and again to everyone concerned, and the idea is, I hope, sinking into their minds."

Arno reflected, and for a few moments breathed in hope. But a conviction of the shadowy nature of the possibility suggested by Harvey dropped on him swiftly, and extinguished the little ray of light that had glimmered around him.

"It is too incredible," he said. "If you had been suspected, Harvey, I should have been inventing just such far-fetched things in your defence. But no one except ourselves would see anything real in them."

"Then, what do you think happened?"

"I don't know," said Arno resolutely. "What is the use of thinking about the thing I did not do? My only business now is to consider how I ought to act. I can't stay here under suspicion. No one with an ounce of manliness would do it. Mr. Montgomery believes, or half believes, that I am an ungrateful thief, and meanwhile I am taking his money, eating his bread——"

"And doing his work," said Harvey. "Do you not see that if you were to leave the place under this cloud you would strengthen suspicion and injure yourself fatally?"

Arno groaned inwardly, while he held his head high and thanked Harvey for his well-meant advice. But the conversation left him unconvinced and uncomfortable, more than ever conscious that he was a creature hopelessly solitary in his misery, caged by the circumstantial evidence that barred him all around.

Durrant was nevertheless unceasingly busy in his efforts to clear Arno of the stain on his character, which day by day, far from fading out, was darkening in colour and threatening to become indelible. Arno's attitude was looked on by the family at Bleachgreens as one of sullen reserve which might be natural to a consciousness of guilt. No one dared to accuse him absolutely in the hearing of Robert or Mark, but there was a great deal of whispering among the others, with occasional outbursts from Jane, who indignantly protested against the closure forced on her by her husband, complaining that he severely forbade those denunciations which were only the honest utterance of her thoroughly convinced and always acute judgment.

"It is well known," she said, "that a woman arrives at the truth more surely by her instinct than a man by all his reasoning and his arguments. And I candidly confess that I never liked that boy. Harvey is really too good-natured. There is a limit to generosity, and he ought to remember the risk of keeping such a person on the premises. And your father is too tolerant, though if he does not see the state of things as

well as I do, I am sure it is not my fault that he is left in blindness!"

The whispers of the girls gradually dropped away into silence. They could not be persuaded that Arno was capable of the conduct imputed to him, and they grew tired of the puzzle which his innocence would necessarily set up. Their mother's habit of mind and tongue also operated with them in his favour, and for the rest they were influenced by Harvey's persistently optimistic view of the matter.

"I would stake my life on Arno," he said. "There is a mystery at the bottom of this whole thing, and some day it will be cleared up."

Herminia agreed with her mother in admiring Durrant's generous faith in one against whom appearances were so condemnatory, but to the younger girls his confidence seemed more natural than the distrust of the others. They wished that Harvey's "mystery" would hasten to clear itself up, and that Arno were back again among his friends. He had been their playfellow in earlier days, and since he had grown tall and manly, they had begun to find him interesting as one who had become half a stranger.

Meanwhile the secret of the theft was well kept, known only to the immediate members of the Montgomery family, Harvey Durrant, and old Slocum, the clerk. Neither Sir Jonah Cunnygham nor Mrs. Fontaine, old friends both, had any idea of the unfortunate occurrence. Harvey in his conversation with Robert on the subject expressed the utmost anxiety that Sir Jonah should hear no hint of the matter.

"You know," he said, "that generous as he is in his own way he is apt to take jaundiced views, and he would never see Arno in the same light again."

"I wish I could see him in the same light again, as you put it," said Robert, "but I thought I had made you understand that I have taken every possible precaution to prevent the knowledge of this affair getting about. Even the Stevensons have not heard a breath of it."

Mark and Hugh were as loyal to Arno as was Durrant, but they said less about it. They were silent to the girls because they could say nothing to reassure them, and they avoided all talk with their mother on the subject, unwilling to increase her animosity towards the supposed culprit by differing with her in judgment.

And their father had put an end to all discussion by assuring them that he would give Arno a certain time to clear himself of the charge which the circumstances persisted in making against him. If, however, after a proper interval no further evidence should be forthcoming in his favour, he should feel painfully obliged to get rid of him, still preserving the silence which would be as a shield to his character, and would enable him to make somewhere else a more fortunate start in the world.

Chapter XXIV

Jane on the Warpath

JANE MONTGOMERY had the species of mind that always believes itself right in judgment by reason of some subtle penetration of its own, in the matter of character or in keen apprehension of the significance of circumstances. She was ever wise after the event, and sure that she had foreseen and foreknown things which had come on others with surprise. Her belief in her own superior wisdom, in her powers of perception and fitness to decide when others hesitated, had grown on her through the years, a good deal because of the desire of less militant spirits for a peaceful life. To differ from Mrs. Montgomery, even in a small matter, was to make a quarrel, or to submit meekly to chastisement by words. The Montgomeries, who were on the whole an amiable family, often preferred the latter alternative, but there was a medium course which they adopted as often as possible, that of absenting themselves when a storm was approaching and leaving Jane in possession of her little universe, to breathe alone the atmosphere of her disturbance and to be the sole auditor of her own thunders. This was a course which of all things she resented and disliked, making many subtle efforts to restrain liberty-seeking footsteps and to obtain a hearing while she "expressed her opinion" and launched forth her denunciations and her predictions.

She had usually a pet grievance on hand, let the subject be great or little, the misdemeanours of a cook or dressmaker,

the bad quality of flour, or the improvidence of people who brought up eleven children on fifteen shillings a week and put nothing in the savings bank. At present her great cause of righteous indignation was the retention of Arno Warrender within the precincts of the mills. She had for some time, even before the late painful occurrence, been regarding him in the light of an unnecessary and undesirable encumbrance to the firm. When declaring that her instincts had from the first warned her to distrust the strange boy thrust into the circle by her husband she was as inaccurate as usual, and, in a way, did herself injustice, seeing that at first she had received him with tolerable good grace, feeling that one boy more or less made very little difference in a household. To Sara she had strongly objected; but the years had reversed her feelings with regard to these two young persons. Sara, who had found a devoted father, could never now be left on her hands, and Arno, on the contrary, had been taking a position which might end disadvantageously to the Montgomery sons. Mark and Hugh were enough in themselves to carry on the works at Bleach-greens, and with Harvey as a third future principal, the firm would be amply provided in this respect, and the profits of the business would be kept within the family. When thus including Durrant within the family, Jane looked on him as the protégé and heir of the wealthy Sir Jonah, and as almost certain to become the husband of her beautiful Herminia, who made no secret of her satisfaction in having secured the attentions of the most attractive and eligible young man in her neighbourhood.

While Jane was persistently ruminating on this state of affairs an opportunity came in her way for setting matters in train for a proper denouement, and she was not the woman to fail to take advantage of it. A little dexterous interference on her part, which to herself she described in the words of the proverb as "taking the bull by the horns," would be likely to lead to a desirable crisis. For six months she had seen no opening for her action, but, as bearing out the truth of the

saying that all things come to him who can wait, at last, on a day in June, the occasion she wished for presented itself.

Following out his intention of giving every chance to Arno, in the hope that he might be able to right himself, Robert had continued to trust him exactly as before, and it happened that at a certain moment he required to send a sum of money to his wife, for some purposes of her own, across the river from the mills to the house. Arno was selected as the messenger, and entrusted with a parcel enclosed in an envelope to Mrs. Montgomery. It was characteristic of Robert that he made no boast of this trust, and gave no hurtful caution, only saying :

“You have two ten-pound notes there ; nothing more. You will hand them to Mrs. Montgomery.”

Jane was alone in the garden, the girls having gone to town to do some shopping. Her large figure, in drapery of light muslin, was pacing up and down between borders stocked with the flowers of the month, purple irises, the white spires of fox-gloves, madonna lilies, vari-coloured peonies, with a foam of silver-white pinks breaking over the path and enriching the air with their delicious fragrance. The birds had not yet done singing, though a mother blackbird was fussily teaching her young ones to fly from the full-leaved bough of a sycamore tree to the hawthorn hedge and back again.

When Jane saw Arno coming down the path to meet her she was a little at fault. Since she had last seen him he had grown taller, and had quite an imposing stature. His brow, too, had grown, and the expression of his eyes was changed. She had thought of him as a sullen boy, conscious of guilt, depressed by his unhappy position, but this young man had a grave, undaunted countenance, which her peculiar intelligence did not enable her to read. That it indicated a noble character she was not prepared to admit ; but though instantly resolving not to be robbed of her opportunity, she felt forced to approach her object with a certain amount of what she considered diplomatic caution.

"Well, Arno," she said, "it is a long time since we have seen you here."

"Yes. I am glad to see you looking well," said Arno, "and the garden is beautiful. Pray, am I to take a reply to Mr. Montgomery?"

"Presently, thank you," she said, feeling as rather pulled up short, and therefore a little irritated and less relenting. Was she to allow the culprit to carry things with a high hand in this manner?

Arno stepped aside while she affected to look over the contents of her husband's note, and was really thinking of how best she could open fire on the delinquent now at her mercy. She was growing a little nervous, and must not give way to weakness.

"I find this is all right," she said presently, "and it gratifies me to say so. You may tell Mr. Montgomery that I feel much pleased at his generously entrusting you with this matter, notwithstanding what has happened."

The gauntlet was now thrown down, and Jane was herself again.

Arno took the blow with head up and eyes on the enemy's face.

"What is the thing that happened, Mrs. Montgomery?" he asked.

"Oh, come," she said, "this will not do! You have been treated with extraordinary leniency, and you ought to be grateful for it. If you are thankless, it is no very hopeful sign."

"What do you think I have done, Mrs. Montgomery?"

Jane had not expected this questioning, and she felt in danger of being routed on her own line of attack. Not having intended to make a direct onslaught, she was now provoked to a sudden spring from indirect to direct accusation. While she hesitated in her passion, Arno repeated his question.

"What is it that you accuse me of? I desire that you will speak plainly."

"This is too impertinent!" she burst forth. "You try to

carry it off too boldly. Do you suppose, sir, that I do not know of the thing that happened last November, when money was taken from Mr. Montgomery's private office?"

"I did not suppose it," said Arno.

"And do you mean me to believe that you know nothing about the disappearance of that money?"

"I mean you and everyone to believe that I know nothing about it."

"Do you suggest that supernatural agencies were at work?"

"I suggest nothing."

"Have you not been aware that you are looked on by everyone as the person who committed that robbery?"

"I have been made painfully aware that I live under a cruel suspicion."

"And you are willing to continue to live under it?"

"Mr. Montgomery has given me to understand that he wished me to remain until some further light should be thrown on a mystery."

"Mystery!" echoed Jane. "Where people act with truth and honesty there is no such thing as mystery. And I am astonished that you are able to take the whole thing so coolly. If Mr. Montgomery has overlooked the matter, you ought at least to offer to repay the loss to him by instalments stopped from your salary."

"I could not do that," said Arno, "because it would be an admission that I had stolen the money."

"An admission which would be your only possible means of showing gratitude to the generosity that has saved you from punishment by law."

Arno's eyes blazed now with a fire that almost frightened Jane.

"I will bear this no longer," he said. "I will go to Mr. Montgomery and tell him so. There are different kinds of wrong-doing that can be punished by law. No man is the more honourable for allowing his reputation to be whispered away."

He turned and walked from the lady and the garden without a parting word or a thought of manners. Wrath had broken out in his heart and burnt up even the bitterness of patience, which lay in ashes with the wreck of forlorn hope and the rubbish of foolish expectations. He knew that his life and his character were in ruins. He seemed to rush past them as he sped rapidly across the bridge, but something had risen within him that promised a life to begin on the margin of that other which was so miserably ending.

Meanwhile Jane, left alone to recover from the shock of her triumph, the excitement of a righteous struggle, smoothed and preened her ruffled feathers as she paced up and down between the lanes of the flowers, spires of coloured light, masses of glowing sweetness, unnoticed, unseen by the eyes of her still smouldering anger. As her blood was gradually restored to its normal temperature and her brain became more clear, she perceived she had now to reckon with her husband as a result to be expected from this interview, and she busied herself in reconstructing it, softening her own angles into curves, rubbing her harsh lines smooth, and transferring them from an extraordinary course to more gracious and natural places.

She must be prepared to defend her action, and to discount any accusation Arno might make as to her reception of him and her attack upon him. She and her husband seldom agreed as to measures to be taken on occasions, and she had a reasonable expectation of rebuke from Robert for having interfered with his more tolerant method of procedure.

When all had been reviewed and rearranged, her own conduct represented to her imagination in the most generous light, she reassured herself by remembering all the bounties and hospitalities bestowed by her on Arno in the past as evidence of her spirit of benevolence towards him, and the enormity of his conduct in treating her present counsel with disrespect and impertinence.

Chapter XXV

“You seem absolutely gay!”

WHEN Arno left Jane and took his way across the bridge back to Mr. Montgomery's office, he felt that a crisis had arrived which would justify his acting as for months he had been longing to act. At all costs, at all risks, he would leave Bleachgreens and cast himself on the world, to seek his fortune where and how he might as chance or Providence might direct him. It would be a hateful way in which to take leave of his friends, and there was just a ray of hope that Robert might, even at this moment, interfere to exonerate him and establish a general conviction of his innocence. In that case he would make a decent pause before setting forth to carve out a career for himself, different from that which had been intended for him by others, whose wishes he had respected and for whose kindness he had been grateful.

Robert was at his desk, and nodded to him, saying merely :

“You have done that errand?”

“Yes, sir ; and I have a message from Mrs. Montgomery.”

“What is that?”

“It is to say that she appreciates your generosity in entrusting me with twenty pounds, seeing that I am believed to be guilty of robbing you of a sum of money five times as great.”

Robert coloured a little. He was not very proud of Jane's good taste, nor sympathetic with her methods.

“I am sorry she spoke of it,” he said, “but you must be aware, and I hope you approve of, my good intention towards you.”

“I am grateful for all your kindness in former days to my father's son—that is how, I know, you have always thought of me. But latterly you have not been kind, Mr. Montgomery. You have pointed to me as a thief, and you allow others to look on me in that character still.”

Mr. Montgomery laid down his pen and sat back in his chair.

“Can you clear yourself?” he asked.

“I can, by my sworn word and by the record of character which I have made.”

“What do you say to the evidence? Facts are stubborn things. The money was on the desk when I left the office; you yourself admit that you saw it. No one entered the room in my absence except you and Sara Stevenson. Unless you put the blame on her, I think you accountable.”

“I saw the money on the desk before you left the office,” said Arno. “After you returned I did not look to see whether it was still there or not. It is your word against mine, my evidence against yours. How can anyone but you yourself swear whether you lost the money or not?”

Robert sat aghast. The boldness of the charge took away his breath. Presently he said:

“You accuse me. ME!”

“There are such things as lapses of memory, Mr. Montgomery. On my case that could have no bearing, in yours it might account for all. I have suffered suspicion for a good many months, and I will suffer it no longer. You must acquit me before those to whom you have blackened me. You must cause Mrs. Montgomery to make me an apology.”

“Leave the room, sir!” said Robert furiously. “This insolence cannot be tolerated.”

“If I leave it now without redress, I can return to it no more,” said Arno, trembling with suppressed excitement.

“Fool!” said Robert contemptuously. “Where can you go?”

“I do not know. It does not matter to those who send me

forth without a character. I am not going to ask their assistance. A way will open, and I will yet make my accusers regret their wicked judgment."

"Leave the room, sir!" shouted Robert again, his anger rendering him unable to discuss the matter further.

"Good-bye, Mr. Montgomery. I am sorry to leave you like this, but you give me no alternative. I shall always remember your kind acts and your good intentions towards my father's son."

Robert silently pointed to the door. In his eyes at the moment Arno was a monster of cold ingratitude.

"When I have settled somewhere I will let you know how a letter may find me, and when the thief of your money is caught I hope you will inform me."

This was Arno's last word before he went out of the door and up the stair to his own room and vigorously began to do his packing.

Meanwhile Robert sat outwardly like a man made of wood, his brain seething with thoughts—angry, painful, regretful. He had seen Arno in a new light, and he was not sure what the change might mean. A bitter conviction that the youth was able, through the possession of the stolen money, to make his escape from a life which did not please him kept forcing its way through every obstruction, and settling down in his mind to lay there the foundation of an impregnable prejudice.

He reviewed sternly the years during which he had persistently befriended Arno, striving to pilot him safely through the restless period of growing youth, during which the ("weak," as Robert put it) artistic nature inherited from his father endangered his prospects of steady success in the future. He thought of his generosity in giving him time for his foolish sketching, the hospitality extended to him, the opening in life liberally arranged for him. That the bag of sovereigns could have been abstracted by a hand other than his appeared, now more than ever, an impossibility. To ingratitude he had added dishonesty, and on dishonesty had piled up more

ingratitude. “ Let him go ! ” thought Robert, with a final thrill of dislike and disgust. “ If his father can now know aught that is going forward here, he will know that I have done my best for him, and have failed ! ”

Meanwhile Arno was energetically at work packing his belongings for departure. His small wardrobe and a few books were disposed of in his school trunk, and his portfolios were easily strapped together as a parcel. When all was done he went down to the yard, and meeting an empty cart returning to the mills, he gave the man something to fetch his luggage and take it to the railway station. Having despatched it, he went to look for Harvey, who was not to be found. Instead of Durrant, however, he encountered Mark, with his eyes full of consternation.

“ I have been talking to my father. What is this he tells me ? You are not going to leave us hastily, Arno ? ”

“ Yes ; I am off at last. Perhaps I ought to have gone before, but I was waiting for my luck to turn, as people say. It isn't going to turn evidently. I didn't want to leave branded as a thief, but Mrs. Montgomery——”

“ Why did you mind my mother's words ? ” cried Mark. “ We all have to bear something in that quarter.”

“ Your father has confirmed her opinions. I can't endure it any longer, and so I am going.”

“ I know you have had a bad time. I have felt for you keenly, but I thought you would have had determination to live it down. Father thought so too. He would have gone on believing in you if you had not been so short with him to-day. You ought to know him by this time. He gives you up because he is in a passion. After all, he has stood by you well, and has had good intentions towards you.”

“ He has not believed in me, or he would respect my suffering, my impatience ! ” burst forth Arno. “ No one has believed in me. I have lived among you, and you have been ready at a moment's notice to disgrace me as a thief. It seems now that I have lived here during the past six months on

toleration, saved from prosecution for felony by your father's regard for the memory of a friend. Ought I to stay here any longer on such terms?"

"You are wrong in saying that no one has believed in you," said Mark. "I have believed in you, Arno, all along the line."

"Thank you, Mark."

"And now, if you must go, where are you going, and how are you to get means of living till you can find employment?"

Arno laughed. "You forget that I have one hundred pounds,—if not to my credit, at least to my discredit."

"Don't jest, Arno. It's too cruel."

"At least one may have a little fun out of it. But I really don't know yet what I shall do. I shall try to get to Italy and become a painter. I have a dear old friend there, you know, the *padre*, who took care of me when I was a child."

"And you will let me have your address, so that when a certain mystery is solved I may let you know at once?"

"Mysteries are never solved, it seems to me, except by miracles, and miracles seldom happen nowadays. As I have been so often told, the money was there, and it disappeared, and there was only one person to take it, that person Arno Warrender. If there had been a window open we might have strained a point to suppose that a magpie came in and took it, but there was no open window. Men who live at desks in offices don't keep open windows. More's the pity, for health and spirit's sake; and for my one chance, as I know there is a nest of magpies in a tree by the river over at Bleachgreens."

"You are a queer fellow. You seem absolutely gay—livelier than I ever knew you before."

"It does seem odd," said Arno, "but two things are making me glad this moment. I am innocent, and you believe in me. Good-bye, old boy! And you will tell me when the magpie turns up. There may be a hole in the building somewhere."

Mark walked with him to the station and saw him off, with regretful eyes and cordial grasping hands; then went slowly

back to Bleachgreens, reflecting that he had a difficult evening before him discussing matters with his angry father, who would, he knew, persist in considering himself injured and outraged by the boy he had befriended.

Arrived in Belfast, Arno had himself conveyed to an old inn on the quays, from which he intended to make acquaintance with the merchant shipping. Some captain bound for an Italian port might allow him to work his passage there in ways that could be only guessed at. It was late in the afternoon when he stood looking at the busy movement on ships and docks, and smelling the tar and ropes. Then something that had been in the back of his mind all day came to the front, and he knew that he must lose no time in going to say good-bye to the Stevensons.

He knew that he could not leave the country to begin a new life elsewhere without seeking these dear friends, but the thing that he could not easily make up his mind about was the necessity for telling them the story of his disgrace and flight. Did it exist or not, that necessity? Whether or not, he felt that he could not invent misleading reasons for his conduct, or leave his friends to learn his misfortune by chance, or from such informants as Mrs. Montgomery, or even from Robert.

Impelled to act in one way, however painful, he pulled himself together, made his dress neat, and set out for Donegall Place, lingering in the streets as he went, staring at near objects that seemed far away from him, trying vainly to imagine a way of putting into words the story that he had got to tell to Sara.

It was supper time, the old pleasant hour for arrival, when he knocked at the Stevensons' door.

Chapter XXVI

Unaccountably, Uncontrollably Happy

ARNO saw at once in the faces of his friends how deeply they were hurt at his long silence. Sara's changing countenance and ready hand soon gave encouragement, but the Colonel kept a certain reserve as he said :

"Well, Arno, you have looked us up at last."

"Yes, Colonel Stevenson," said Arno, "and I should not be here at all, only that I have come to say good-bye."

"Good-bye !" echoed Sara. The Colonel did not speak for a moment or two, but eyed him steadily.

"What is the matter ?" he asked.

"I am leaving Bleachgreens in disgrace. I cannot live there longer under an unjust suspicion."

The bare hideousness of the situation had so taken the foreground of his view of all things that nothing else was distinctly visible to him, and he forgot the difficulties, the fancied impossibility of speech in which to put before those who loved him the form and substance of the misfortune that had befallen him. The truth was now out, and words were no obstacle to his tongue.

"I don't understand," said the Colonel.

"Neither do I," said Arno. "That is just it. Nobody understands. But money has been stolen, and the theft is ascribed to me."

"Impossible !" cried Sara.

"Sit down, Arno, and let us talk about it," said the Colonel,

after a long look in the fierce eyes that never flinched from his while words were hurled forth like stones out of a sling at an enemy's head. "There has been some mistake, and you have been too impatient with it."

"Have I not been patient for six months, have I not been cowardly meek, enduring to wait for some impossible thing to turn up to clear my character? Colonel Stevenson, think of it! If you were blackened as a thief, would you be patient with it?"

"I'm afraid I shouldn't," said the Colonel. "But the circumstances must have been extraordinary, and I want to hear the whole of it."

Arno then related the story from the beginning with as much calmness as he could command. The Colonel listened, weighed, and questioned. Sara sat by, dumb with dismay. She was amazed at Arno in this new aspect. He was no longer the quiet, serious, self-repressed youth, but all alive with the energy of his indignation. Art, duty, the duty of plodding to prove gratitude, were forgotten in the passion that urged but one thing, the thorough vindication of his innocence.

"It is very mysterious," said the Colonel.

"And intolerable," said Arno.

"I do not see how you can blame your friends."

"Or how they can blame me. As I said to Mr. Montgomery, it is only his word against mine. He says he missed the money after I had left his office."

"I don't wonder he is angry if you spoke to him so."

"Why? How am I to feel sure of the accuracy of his memory? Is it an enormity to suggest any mental failure in him while there is no scruple about destroying my good name for life?"

"No, no," said the Colonel. "No destroying. The cloud will lift. Now, tell me, is there not some way by which an outsider could get at Montgomery's desk while you and Sara were absent?"

"None, except a long closed-up door, visibly not disturbed

for years, and the outer office, where Mark, Harvey, and Slocum were at work. All that has been examined into, and nothing could possibly come of it."

"And yet a thief entered the office during the five minutes when you were not there," said the Colonel. "That is the plain fact, and we have got to prove it."

"Mark is to write to me when the magpies' nests have been searched," said Arno, with a bitter laugh. "I ought to be thankful that Mark and Harvey both believe in me. I could not find Harvey to say good-bye. Will you tell him so, Colonel, when you see him?"

"You are not gone yet," said the Colonel. "Sara and I believe in you, and we want some time to get over the shock. You must stay with us here till you have time to look about you."

"No, thank you, Colonel Stevenson, I could not do it. I will never see my friends again till my good name is cleared. At all events I have gained my liberty, and I will make use of it or die. Italy and Art may now be my watchwords."

"You mean to go to Italy?"

"I shall take the dear old *padre* by surprise. He will shed tears and rub his spectacles when he hears my story. It will be bitter enough to return to him in disgrace. But if I remember him at all, he was always the friend of the unfortunate, and pitiful to sinners."

"How do you mean to make your way to Italy?"

"I have already made interest with a captain who is sailing for Genoa, and who will find me something to do for him in return for my passage. I believe I am going to paint his portrait standing on the deck. Not a bad picture would he make, with his bluff face."

"Well, you have not dallied with time at all events. I commend your promptitude. You will sup with us now, however, and let us have a few more words together before we wish you God-speed."

So Arno supped with these friends for the last time, and casting off his care, gave himself up to the enjoyment of the

hour. Their ready confidence in him bore him up, and he was able to talk with joyful expectation of the career now open to him. The Colonel forbore to betray the concern he felt at the young man's breach with the Montgomeries, and talked of Italy and Art, recalling never-to-be-forgotten experiences of radiant life in the land of romance and beauty. Sara was unusually silent. Arno's misfortune was to her a cause of burning indignation, and his dropping out of her life looked to her like an evil that could never be overcome. The difficulties which he so spiritedly ignored kept rising up before her, one more redoubtable than another, and her woman's nature beheld him like an infant powerless to defend himself from them. A little cruel seemed his joy in release from what had been to him a bondage, seeing that freedom meant separation from those who had grown so close to him in sympathy. All these impressions, struggling with one another, deprived her of her usual readiness of speech, while her father chatted with the friend who was to be with them no more as cheerfully as though he had been merely paying them one of the current visits of former days.

After supper the Colonel led them to the workshop. For six months Arno had not seen the work of the great invention, and he found the model much improved.

"Harvey is greatly pleased with it," said the Colonel, "but he advises me to wait still longer for new inspirations on points of detail. I am not sure that he knows a great deal about it, but he thinks he does. As a factory man, who lives in the midst of machinery, one ought to give him credit for more knowledge than he displays."

"I shall hear of its success some day soon," said Arno.

During the evening, while the Colonel was engaged in looking up some other matters to show to Arno, Sara had an opportunity of asking him a question on one point which was causing her anxiety.

"How are you going to travel to Genoa, how to live till you can get paying work?" she said.

"Oh, I have money enough," said Arno, smiling in her anxious eyes. "Plenty to last me as long as will be necessary."

"Will you take a loan from me? I have one hundred pounds of my own, which I have got in an extraordinary manner. Some day I may tell you how."

"I don't need it," persisted Arno. "Thanking you all the same, I won't take it. But your thought for me will be sweet to remember when I am far away."

"And you will ask for it if you find you want it?"

"I won't promise that," said Arno; "but I am in earnest in saying that I know I shall not require it."

When saying good-bye at last, his friends realized his position more than he seemed to do himself. They watched him from the open hall door marching down the street with his head well up, his quick step beating time to an assured hope, an invigorating expectation.

"Will he forget us?" said the Colonel, looking up from his chair at Sara and noting that the lamplight, burning faintly in the clear dusk of the starry summer night, made her face look pale.

"No," said Sara emphatically.

"You still believe in him?"

"Of course I do," said Sara reproachfully.

The Colonel smothered a little sigh, and laughed kindly.

"Let us not break the dream of youth, my dear," he said. "I am nearly as young as you, you know, by reason of my infirmity. My experience of the world was cut off with my poor legs, and I am still a big boy, I suppose. Or at least people would tell me so if I were to show them the innermosts of my mind."

By dawn Arno was on board his ship and in touch with the sympathies of his captain. Here the artistic nature, repressed by factorial machinery and the natures moving with it, gave itself out in gushes of free warmth and sweetness, and flung itself on everything human that flourished in the salt sea foam and the veering breezes.

"I'm used enough to chaps wanting to work their passages,"

said the Captain, "but commonly it's on the mast the best of them would like to be, and the worst of them sitting in the hold! An artist-fellow like you, askin' to paint his way into a picture climate's a bit new to me. Oh, yes; I'll be ready to have my picture done to-morrow, but it will rather be a snatch with you, you know, for the ship's my business, and 'tisin't life and death with me to be puttin' myself on canvas for my grandchildren!"

On the first day at sea the captain had not time even to speak to him, and Arno occupied himself making sketches of coast scenery and of the sailors at work. He found himself unaccountably, uncontrollably happy, although conscious that he ought to be feeling lonely and very miserable. Out on that fresh wave, where a sweet, wild nature offered itself to him for company and as plentiful subject-matter for his work, he could not feel himself either guilty or unfortunate. The trial he had passed through lay behind him like a dark wood, amidst which he had had to grope in order to reach this light. Friends seemed as not left behind and parted with for ever, but as standing not very far away to watch his progress. Even Robert Montgomery lost his angry frown after memory had dropped him for awhile and picked him up again to have another look at him. How good he had been for years, how kind, how faithful to the memory of a friend he had loved! Jane, hurling cruel words at him in the garden, was reduced to the dimensions and to the class of a wasp making its rasping noise among the June lilies, and the honeyed musks and lavenders.

The Colonel and Sara stood apart in a green shady grove of memory, with sunshine flitting over them through young spring boughs, and flowers rising out of the grass at their feet. There they would wait for him till he came to them with his hands full of hard-won fruits of genius.

And when all things of the past had settled themselves into their own places the sweet, anxious look in Sara's eyes was the first and the last that hovered wistfully to the front, and was going with him all the way.

Chapter XXVII

“He has the Faults of his Virtues”

ON the hot summer morning after Arno's leave-taking, Sara and her father sat at breakfast by a wide-open window looking on the old-fashioned garden within its high lichened walls at the back of the “Place,” from which the birds had been driven by the clangour of bells ringing across roof and chimneys from factories not a mile away.

It was time to think of a change to the country. The Colonel thought that Sara looked as if she needed it, and Sara was sure that it was absolutely necessary for her father's health.

“What about the Glens?” asked the Colonel.

“What do you think, Daddy?”

“And you?”

“I think we should miss Arno too much. It is too lonely a place. Last year he made it all alive, didn't he?”

“I have been feeling that. Some people would call it a womanish sentiment, but I suppose my infirmity makes me more feminine in these matters, besides keeping me young.”

“What do you say to Bangor on the Lough? Arno was with us at Bangor, but only as a boy. We can have him there with us in spirit now, without so close a touch of the recent pain.”

“Good!”

“And then it is so bracing, and near the line of the passing ships. And the fine cliffs! And the Kinnegar—one of the

places,” said Sara laughing, “where my dear fairies of old are still alive and delightful.”

“Burrow in the holes under the whin-bushes, I suppose?” said the Colonel.

“I never tried to locate them precisely,” said Sara, tipping the cream ewer and carefully watching the rich drops slip from the silver into her father’s tea-cup, gauging his delicate taste to a nicety. “I always felt it might be dangerous. Such dainty creatures do not like to be pried upon.”

Later in the day she came to him saying :

“Father, I feel that I don’t want to go away to Bangor without knowing something more about this affair of Arno’s.”

The Colonel nodded.

“I have thought it better to wait for Robert Montgomery to speak,” he said.

“I can’t wait. I want to know what they are all thinking and saying about it. I must let them feel that we believe Arno to have been wronged.”

“Do what you like, dear. But be sure you do it prudently.”

“I will go to Bleachgreens and see Mr. Montgomery myself. I am not afraid of him. He was always nice to me.”

“He is a hot-tempered man—has the faults of his virtues. He does not like to be contradicted or to have his judgments questioned.”

“I can’t help that. I must speak to him in the best way I can.”

And Sara went.

She knew that Robert was not to be found at Bleachgreens during certain hours, and so she turned down the avenue to the mills and walked by the mill-race in the direction of the yard and the office.

It was all so sweetly familiar to her,—the steady, slow-footing water, deep and strong for big effort, laughing at the sky in its strength, and gay with reflections, as a great mind can be playful with fancies and lovely with dreams. The lazy sagons

fringing the banks, hardly stirring in the breeze, the thundering wheel of the "beetles" making foam like an angry giant gnashing his teeth, as she used to think. Then, away above and beyond, yarn-walks with moving figures, white-ribbed bleach-greens, and a distance of green tree-dotted slopes and hills, white gates suggestive of woodland openings and approached by lanes of flowering hedges.

She had never been here before with a pain in her heart, and wondered that the place seemed to take a new aspect in her eyes as if a thin grey cloud had spread itself over everything, though the sun was shining. Scarcely before had she realized that such a cloud can rise from the inner human mind blurring beauty in the eyes that gaze, and chilling joy in the soul that contemplates.

She was shown into Robert's office, and entered it with a painful recollection of the last time she had been there, the unfortunate day of a mysterious happening which was timed to have occurred during the interval when she herself and Arno had stood waiting together on Robert's convenience.

Robert was surprised at seeing her.

"I hope you are not too busy to speak to me, Mr. Montgomery," she said. "It is about something very particular which father and I are anxious about."

"I can give you half-an-hour. What is this very important matter, Sara? I hope your father is well."

"Oh, yes, he is well," she said with a sudden quick consciousness of something to be thankful for. "It is not about my father. It is about Arno."

"What about Arno?" said Robert, his face darkening.

"He came to us the other evening and told us of his great misfortune."

"Oh, he did, did he? I am glad he thinks of it as a misfortune."

"We are not glad, Mr. Montgomery," said Sara, not perceiving that she was letting go her prudence a little already, but feeling wise because she was speaking calmly. "We are



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“SARA STOOD UP, AND HER EYES WIDENED AND SHONE”

grieved that he has been accused of something he is incapable of doing.”

“Well, my young lady, I do not require you to come here to censure me in this or any other matter. Is your good father aware that you have taken upon you to lecture me?”

“Oh, no, not that,” said Sara, awakened to a sense of having blundered at the first step.

“What, then?” asked Robert impatiently.

“We think there has been some great mistake.”

“Do you know the circumstances? Possibility points steadily only one way. This is not an affair of yesterday. Time has been given. A suspension of judgment for six months has only resulted in proving Arno guilty of impertinence as well as——”

“Don’t say it!” cried Sara.

“I am sorry to have to say it,” said Robert with an effort to control his irritation. To a nature conscious of generosity and averse to boasting, nothing is harder to bear than the forced appearance of unnecessary severity towards, or of a grudging distrust of, another.

“Time has not proved; it has only failed to disprove,” urged Sara.

“You seem to know all the circumstances,” said Robert. “Can you account for what happened? Can Arno himself suggest anything? His conduct, to my mind, has not been that of an innocent person. For months he has been silent and sullen with me, and then he blazes forth into insolence, resenting a word of reproach, as if he had not been all the time aware of the light in which he had been necessarily regarded.”

Sara stood up, and her eyes widened and shone.

“Do you mean to say, positively, that you believe Arno stole your bag of one hundred sovereigns from your desk?”

“I do believe it. And now I will ask you a question in return for yours. Where do you suppose this boy, this young

man, has got money to enable him to leave this place and go abroad to make a new opening for himself in life?"

"He has some money of his own,—enough with his exertions."

"Tush! Where did he get it?"

"He will work his passage, earn his way about. I tell you he did not do this thing, Mr. Montgomery!" cried Sara vehemently.

Robert threw himself back in his chair.

"You are so sure!" he said. "Shall I tell you, young lady, something you ought to know? In case of Arno's innocence, what is the only other way of accounting for the disappearance of the money?"

"Is there another way? I thought you said there was none."

"The only other way is—remember, please, that you have brought this upon yourself—the only alternative is that you, Miss Sara, being the only other person in this room during my absence, took it with your own hand."

Sara was stricken dumb. The blood rushed to her face, then ebbed away and left it white.

"I see," she said faintly.

"Are you satisfied now?"

"No, I am not satisfied. Arno did not take it."

"Then, did you?"

"I do not intend to answer that question."

"Do you not deny the charge?"

"What could I want to do with—the money?"

"I cannot say. Young ladies are sometimes fond of jewellery, covet some trinket beyond their lawful reach. We have heard of such instances. I should not have thought of you as one of these, but I must say again you have drawn this suggestion from me. I have not volunteered it; for your father's sake."

"Leave my father's name out of the matter, Mr. Montgomery. It is only justice to deal with people as individuals

on their own merits. Arno's character, my character, is at stake. Our fathers—the thought of whom has not restrained you—have nothing to do with it.”

Robert's anger rose now to its full height. The knowledge of his own loyalty to the memory of Arno's father rendered Sara's allusion to him more intolerable than anything that had been said. He attempted to speak, but remained inarticulate from pain and passion.

Sara rose to go.

“I have said all I had to say,” she said.

“Not all I want to hear,” said Robert. “You have refused to clear yourself.”

“I will not do so at the cost of condemnation of Arno. I am as sure of his conduct as of my own. And you need not be afraid that I shall pain my father by complaining of your reception of his daughter. It would make him too miserable, he would feel too terribly insulted. As for me, I do not believe that you have meant all you have said to me. I remember your past kindness. One word I will say to you at parting—you will live to be proud of Arno!”

Robert stood up. The parting challenge was too much for him. What he would have said cannot be recorded, for Sara had bowed and disappeared before further utterance could be attained.

After she had gone he dropped back into his chair, while the fumes of his passion gradually escaped, leaving his brain more cool and more capable of reasoning reflection.

Sara had behaved outrageously, and had put herself in his power, but for her father's sake he would not punish her. He could hardly believe that it was she who had stolen the money, but then, until to-day, he could not have believed her capable of speaking to him as she had just spoken. Her persistent asseveration of Arno's innocence seemed to imply some actual knowledge of what had really occurred. Her determination to keep her father in ignorance of his suggestion as to her own possible guilt seemed too quixotic unless it could be read in the light of fear of any investigation on his part.

Mark came into the office while he sat lost in painful thought, and to him Robert poured out his experience in the interview with Sara. Mark was much impressed by the story, feeling deeply for his father's annoyance in the whole affair, and perplexed by Sara's unnecessarily active movement in it.

"Either she is a very noble girl," he said, "or——"

"Or what?" said Robert.

"I can't say it," said Mark. "It is impossible to connect the idea of Sara Stevenson with a mean theft."

"I should have said the same of Arno," said Robert gloomily. "I suppose we are expected to fall back again on the ground taken up by each of this irreproachable pair, the existence of a mystery which cannot be solved. I see that this will cut me off from Colonel Stevenson's friendship, or at least from his society. That astonishing young lady declared her intention of keeping the knowledge of the alternative concerning herself, as I put it to her, from her father. What her motive in that is, I do not know. If it be nobility of character she soars too high for me. I cannot associate with the Colonel, as it appears she can do, with such thoughts in my mind, and not betraying them, somehow, by speech, or looks, or manner. The whole thing has become disgusting and repulsive to me, and threatens to be a chronic worry, distracting me from my business. So, let it be understood by you and the others, that I am not to be spoken to again on the subject. Heaven knows I would give far more than the hundred pounds over again to forget that this miserable incident ever occurred."

Robert then turned abruptly to his desk, and Mark felt himself to be as suddenly dismissed from his presence.

As Sara returned up the avenue by the slow, deep water of the mill-race, which had now taken the deeper shadow into its reflections of a cloud in the heavens, she asked herself whether she had really been guilty of the imprudence against which her father had warned her, seeing that at every word she had spoken Robert Montgomery had become more angry? Had she provoked his choleric temper so that he had said things he

did not believe? She was surprised that she did not feel more indignant at the “alternative” with regard to herself. It was too utterly ridiculous—the suggestion that her father’s daughter could be so in need of money as to steal it, and even steal it from the friend who had been kind to her from her childhood. Yet she felt assured that the more war-like side of the Colonel’s nature would be in arms did she tell him of the insult. She would not tell him, would not so hurt him and disturb the serenity of a life which, in spite of his personal misfortune, had become so sweetened with peace, and so alive with interest in practical matters relating to the welfare of others.

And after all this had been thought out, in a consciousness shared by the brooding water, and the fluttering sedge, and the grey willows bending to fathom the stream, and the tall chestnuts and sycamores walling the bleachgreen, another idea came to her as if drummed into her ear by the continuous rolling thunder of the beetling engines. By sharing suspicion with Arno, was she not lessening it for him? If she could be supposed to be the guilty one, then he must be exempted from blame. She had been too proud absolutely to deny the imputation. Even to say directly “I did not do it” had seemed to her to imply that there was a reasonable charge to be denied. If her hesitation were taken in a different sense by suspicious minds, then let it be so. She was better fitted to endure a false charge than Arno, seeing that she had no career to be injured, no public character to be damaged, nothing to bear from injustice except the pain of being degradingly misunderstood.

Returning to her father, she said simply :

“I saw Mr. Montgomery, but I could not move him. I fear I did no good. Every word I spoke seemed to fix him more firmly in his own belief, and to make him more angry.”

“That is Robert!” said the Colonel. “I knew how it would be. But you have generously done your best, little girl. Time may yet prove the friend that Arno lacks. Mean-

while, the shock has done him no harm, and a lie can nearly always be lived down."

A day or two later a letter arrived from Arno on his way to Italy, so full of joyous spirits, so absolutely free from complaint, regret, or anxiety, that his friends could hardly see in the writer any trace of the Arno whom they had pitied and defended, who had seemed to live under a cloud even before misfortune had overtaken him.

"He was a prisoned bird. He has found his wings!" cried Sara.

"An eagle, perhaps?" said the Colonel slyly with a smile at her enthusiasm.

"Possibly," said Sara, "but a strong-winged bird at all events."

"One thing puzzles me," said the Colonel. "How can he get along without money?"

"He said he had plenty," said Sara.

"Where did he get it?"

"I do not know."

"He always said that his spare shillings went for artist materials. He failed to sell such pictures as he sent to London."

"Father, you must not begin to suspect Arno!"

"Suspect him? No, my dear. But I am older than you, and not so enthusiastic. I have, however, made up my mind to be with you in believing in your hero."

"Not because he is my hero."

"Come, little daughter, let us agree to drop the subject for the present. We are going to Bangor to-morrow, and a little change of air and thought will be good for us both, I think."

Sara said no more, and the flitting into a cottage on the cliffs skirting the Kinnegar above the sea occupied her for the next day or two. But on the first night after her arrival there she had a strange experience. She wakened with the roll and splash of the waves of the rising tide among the rocks, and suddenly seemed to see Arno standing before her assuring

her that he had plenty of money to make the change in his life, though he did not tell her where he had got it. At the same moment the words of Robert Montgomery and of her father both questioning the source from which he drew his admitted pecuniary ease filled her ears, as if the waves were chanting them in the stillness of the hour of dawn. As if raised by the incantation, a new idea, a horrid shape, crept out of the shadows and stood in the twilight announcing itself as a doubt of Arno's innocence. It seemed to point with a leprous finger at his discontent and weariness in his life at the mills, his lack of money even to buy himself a suit of evening clothes for the dance, his difficulty even in procuring materials for his artistic efforts which he practised only as on sufferance.

Sara sat up in bed aghast, staring at this horrid intruder, then sprang to the floor and threw out her arms as if to repel the actual form of some night marauder. The shade vanished, and she threw up the blind from the open window and with a little sob of joy saw the gold light breaking in the east.

“God be thanked for faith and for light!” she whispered. “If so dark a phantom can dare to come to me, can I wonder that others are haunted by it?”

Chapter XXVIII

All signed Kitty Canavan

ARNO'S next letter was written from Florence, delighting in his liberty, in the beauty of his native country, and the associations of Art all around him.

He had already made arrangements for pursuing his studies in Florence, he said, and was full of hope.

About the same time a letter came from the *padre* to the Colonel deploring that Arno had broken away from his kind friends and employers who had provided him with a safe opening in life, to follow, as must be feared, in the footsteps of his father.

Having poured forth his regrets, however, the *padre* went on to say that he had of late perceived the fine promise of Arno's work, and could not compare him with his poor father as to talent, health, or physical and mental energy. It was for his friends to hope that his courage would be rewarded, that his ardent expectations might be realized.

"The *padre* will soon be won over," said the Colonel. He was sitting on the cliffs, on the Kinnegar, with Sara when the letter arrived, and the salt sea-breezes fluttered the paper as they coned it and discussed it between them.

"I was sure it would be so," said Sara.

The Colonel sat silent for some time with the letter in his hand. At last he said:

"One thing remains as a puzzle to me. All these arrangements require money. Where has Arno been able to get it?"

Sara bent her head to pick a tiny flower out of the grass to hide the sudden colour that rushed to her face as she remembered her momentary midnight experience, when an imagination rather than a thought had seemed to imply a doubt.

"Did he give you no hint on this point, Sara?"

"He said merely that he had plenty of money for all his requirements."

The Colonel was silent, folded the letter and put it away; but when, after some time, he looked up again from his book it was to continue the conversation where he had left it off.

"I thought of offering him money," he said, "but something restrained me, something that came, I believe, from himself."

"I tried him," said Sara. "He would not hear of it. It was then that he said he had enough."

"I wish he had told you where he had got it."

"Why need we care, father? We believe in Arno."

"Oh, yes, we believe in him," said the Colonel, glancing at his daughter's face, in which he thought he saw some anxiety struggling with fixed resolution, and applied himself once more to his book.

After this Arno was not spoken of between them for some time. Sara felt that she could not bear to see again the look that was on her father's face when he had asked her those questions relating to Arno's lack of money, and the Colonel was unwilling to increase the anxiety which he had perceived as clouding the clear lustre of his daughter's eyes.

When next in her little room above the sea, Sara threw open the window, at which she could taste the salt breath of the waves, took some papers from her desk, and tried to divert the current of her thoughts by looking through them. They contained her jottings of her own fancies and her own experiences, to which she added on occasions when the mood or the opportunity urged her. She was in the creative mood now, and turned over different manuscript books, each devoted to

some purpose of its own. She had a book of characters and a book of plots for stories. A short story, just finished, was read critically, a piece of verse was conned thoughtfully and amended. A line of the latter appeared stilted, and she drew her pen through it, but put it away without correction, to await a moment of inspiration. Sara was, indeed, on the high-road to become an author, or rather she was travelling by a bye-path which would some day give on the high-road. Already some of her efforts had been successful, published in magazines under a name assumed to conceal her identity. She had gathered from her father's conversation that he should not like any kind of publicity for his daughter; she even feared his possible disapproval of her attempts at authorship. With such impressions she had restrained her desire to share this, as every other interest and pleasure, with one who was so dear, so unspeakably good to her. Somewhat of a like feeling, though with a difference, had influenced her in keeping a certain degree of silence on the same subject with Arno, who, with the natural egotism of a very young man intent on his own ambition, had pooh-poohed the idea of serious artistic work of any kind for a thoroughly womanly woman. To be less than a womanly woman would have been to Sara the last misfortune that could befall her as an individual. The truest instinct of her character was to be the sympathetic, helpful, and trusted companion of a masculine nature of which her own was the complement, one looking to her to supply out of her womanliness something lacking in itself. To run a race with a man on his own intellectual lines was so far from her desire that she had crept with her fancies into a little wood of reserve, off the beaten path of life, and kept them there in sanctuary safe from the chance blowing of blighting winds and the scorch of noon-tide heats. It was enough if her father and Arno knew that certain scribblings at her desk gave her pleasure, looking on them as a feminine amusement; there was no need to tell them that she had actually seen herself in print. Time enough for that when, if ever, she had produced

something really worthy of their commendation, something approved by high and disinterested critics before brought under their more interested notice.

Meanwhile the little stories and sketches which she sent forth from time to time were all signed "Kitty Canavan," and mightily proud was the old nurse of the productions ascribed to her. She was the sole confidante in whom Sara deposited the secret of her literary efforts, craving sympathy from some quarter, and at times desiring an audience, that she might hear how her paragraphs sounded; by her own ear criticising the run of her story, while detecting superabundance in rapturous descriptions and minute characterizations.

Kitty was a better critic than many a more educated listener might have proved, giving her impressions without scruple, and lecturing her nursling with as much freedom as if she had still been of an age to be ordered to bed at a proper hour or put in the corner for disobedience.

"Well, now, Miss Sara, I don't understand a word of all that last long piece, from the time the man stopped talkin'. It's too much of a rigmarole about nothin'. Of course it's language, and sounds grand, but I'd rather have the parts where somethin' is doin' and happenin', and where there's plenty of talk."

"But, Kitty, parts like that tell you a good deal about the way things are, and the thoughts that come into people's minds, and the scenery around them, and we can't do without some of all that, you know."

"I'd cut it short, then. I will say I could do without the whole of it, first rate. Anybody that was in a hurry couldn't wait for it."

Sara would try to explain that stories were not always written for people in a hurry, not the best stories, and she mentioned the names of great writers whose works included passages which Kitty would consider dull; but Mrs. Canavan remained obdurate.

"May be so, dearie, may be so. But you'll be puttin'

my name to it, and I'd rather be one that would write lively."

Then Sara would hide her smiles at Kitty's jealous fears for her literary reputation which she considered at stake, and promise that she would try not to disgrace her. But she usually profited by the old woman's strictures, cutting down any possible redundance of the "language" that Kitty described as "grand," and aiming at the simplicity of the old, old tales which, with their few trenchant words, seize the heart and imagination of the young and the unlearned.

"That'll do now," Kitty would say. "I can hear the people talkin', and see where they're goin'. And I can guess better what they're up to."

"If you see too well what is going to happen, does not that spoil the interest of the story?" remonstrated Sara.

"No it doesn't; not always," said Kitty. "I like to see my way. I want to be guessin' and not to be sure. I don't agree with things standin' still as if the end was come already, and nothin' properly cleared up, and no story after all that was worth the tellin' of it."

"Kitty, you're a splendid critic, and I'm following your advice. What could I do without you?"

"It's what I always tried to do, Miss Sara, to be a guide and a help to you since you were a motherless babe in my arms."

"But you didn't expect to be writing books for me?"

"It wasn't in the bargain, of course, child, but I always felt that I would stop at nothin' to serve you for your good."

"And when this story is properly corrected, you won't object to giving your name to it?"

"Nonsense, child! Is there anything I wouldn't do for you?"

All the time Kitty was lost in wonder at her darling's brilliant powers, and expected that any day might bring a burst of applause from a world enraptured with the genius of Kitty Canavan.

"And, of course, I'll have to tell them then that it wasn't me," she reflected as she sat alone at her knitting. "I'm not goin' to take her glory from her. Not if my name is Kitty Canavan."

The shrewd old woman was helpful to Sara's literary labours in other ways besides that of blunt criticism. Her memory was well stored with such stories and legends as hang about mountain sides and woody glens, and from this capital Sara drew freely to provide groundwork for the fabrics of her own invention. Kitty's romances were chiefly tragedies, the catastrophes and reverses of grand old families, the struggles and misfortunes of the poor.

Kitty did not approve of such stories being written down.

"What's the use?" she would cry. "They're all over an' done with; an' I hope the souls are in heaven an' have forgot all that they suffered here. Why would you write it down to sink other people's hearts? I wish I could remember a story that was all about happiness, but dear, dear, it's scarce in the world, is that same. And the young an' the few that is fortunate needn't be bothered with bein' told the way most things end."

Sara did not tell her that it is just the young and the happy who find pleasure in reading tragedies; perhaps she was too young herself to know it, or, at all events, to find a reason for the fact.

And, like the work of most beginners, her own stories were founded on the most tragic episodes which the memory of Mrs. Canavan could provide. Prosperity and contentment seemed tame, and quiet doings hardly to be included in a scheme of thorough living. Sorrows and difficulties alone gave romance to existence.

Chapter XXIX

A New Life

ARNO had located himself in Florence in a garret, from which he could look down from a great height on his namesake, the river. The room was poor and bare, his quarters at the mill had been luxurious in comparison, but into it the sunshine of Italy streamed, and across the masts of ships the beauty of palaces reared by his mother's race could be descried in the mellow sky. Within reach of his footsteps were the glorious churches, the historic galleries where lived, a little out of the sunshine, in the shadow of the ages, the undying creations of the great masters whom he venerated. Every hour of his day was spent in study, whether at work upon life-models in class, or haunting hallowed halls and sacred aisles, communing with the spirits who in the flesh had caught fire from heaven; or later, in the twilight of the Italian summer night, wandering abroad among the gardens beyond the city, searching that star-flowered heaven for inspiration to do such work as would win him a place among his country's noblest sons, as follower in the footsteps of Raffaële, Leonardo, Perugino, Michelangelo.

"Why did I lose so much time plodding at that desk?" he thought. "And to what end? To be sent out at last branded as a thief!"

But let that be forgotten. Here he was another person, a new creature. He could wear a ragged coat if he pleased. The beggar boys and contadini who mounted the stair to his

garret were not scandalized at seeing a painter out at elbows, and when he sought human nature in the churches and slums nobody knew him, nobody stared at his failure from the ways and the garments of gentility. His diet of coffee, bread, and fruit could be purchased with the small sums of money for which he sold the little pictures and sketches, made for such sordid purpose in hours snatched from the days' more noble work. His short hours for sleep brought it to him sound and sweet, between the laughter and music of the night pleasure-seekers below on river and pavement, and the cries and cart-wheel rumblings of the morning market-people at their business by the earliest daylight.

He was scarcely established in his new quarters with his frugal arrangements made when the *padre* arrived from the Casentino, boarded his garret, and insisted on carrying him off to his own little home to study nature in the open air while summer lasted. Arno could urge no sufficient reason for resistance, and the two who many years before had been constant companions rambled together once more among the vines and gardens of an earthly paradise, and ate and slept in the little brown house where Sara, too, had, in her turn, lived delightful waking hours and dreamed delicious dreams.

To Arno the change brought a new rapture. The small living room with its vine-curtained windows, so cool out of the burning sunshine, the table with its coarse white cloth laden with fruit and vegetables, the peculiar home-made bread and pungent coffee, all took him back to a happy childhood of which this dear old wrinkled man was the protector. If he had expected reproach or displeasure for his seemingly erratic conduct, no such thing was met with here. The *padre* had now made up his mind that Arno was following a natural bent; and that in so doing he was obeying a call from God such as those receive who find themselves impelled to enter on courses which, for them, are the noblest of all the paths that lead through this mysterious world.

As they sat outside the door under the pergola of vines in

the cool of the evening, Arno expressed his gladness at having been received back again here with so much trust and confidence.

"I thought I must expect," he said, "to be looked on as a naughty boy who had run away from all his fortunate opportunities."

"I confess I felt a shock when you first told me of the step you had taken," said the *padre*. "'What?' I cried, 'Arno in Florence, having turned his back on his powerful friends, on the practical work offered to him, on the opening given him to become a successful man of business, a man to make money, to own a fine house, and to be highly thought of among the wealthy English merchants! Ah,' I said, 'it is his father once again! Alas, for the fatality of heredity! Must I suffer again in him the disappointment of many years ago?'"

Arno nodded. "I saw it all, for you, *padre*. I beheld it with your eyes, I felt it with your heart. And now, tell me what has changed your mind, *padre mio*?"

"It came to me like an inspiration. I was walking in the fields in the early morning, and suddenly the beauty of everything struck me in a way it had never done before. The sky, the young flowers, the glory of trees in the sunshine, the distant landscape so golden, so peaceful. It all brought before me the loveliest works of the great masters of Art, and I thought if a man had to choose a gift from God might he not wisely choose the gift to interpret, to point out, to consecrate for the joy of mankind such beauty as this that surrounds me, fresh as it is from the Creator, the reflection and image of supreme goodness? And why not Arno one of those? Why hark back always on the failure of his father? Here is a new nature with, probably, energy and genius added to the love of beautiful things which, in the other case, for some inscrutable reason, lacked the union with power."

The old man's voice trembled with feeling, and he paused. Arno slipped a hand through his arm and said:

"Why at that moment did you suddenly endow me with great gifts?"

"You will remember a drawing you sent me of a field with sheep moving towards a fold in the land. I think I had been believing in you ever since I saw it, but at that precise moment the landscape I was looking on seemed a witness to the truth of that work of yours. I cannot satisfactorily explain it, but the spirit that bloweth where it listeth was in your interpretation as it was in this living nature. The sudden glorious testimony overwhelmed me. I said, 'The Almighty Father is calling my son back to the land of beauty, the land of the sanctity of Art. Welcome be the will of God in this extraordinary manifestation!'"

Arno pressed the arm he held and turned away his head, and nothing more was said for a few minutes. But from that day forth the two friends, the young and the old, found themselves in perfect sympathy one with the other. Arno felt that he had got the sanction of the wise old man to live and flourish in the atmosphere that gave him inspiration and energy, to be content to live poorly and simply in order to make use of God's great gift. And the *padre* settled down to watch the development of that gift with the deepest interest, to pray continually for a harvest of sweet work for the worker, work to sweeten the world, to nourish and strengthen and elevate the spirits of other workers perhaps yet to be born.

Looking at the *padre* as he sat with his face to the golden light, Arno bethought him of painting a portrait of the old man, having in mind certain other portraits, world-famous, of which the originals had been obscure men and women, neither beautiful nor young, but made worthy of eternal wonder and admiration for the living character recorded, transfused with the glory of the dream in the soul of the artist.

Here, thought Arno, were the glory and the dream prepared and awaiting the daring pencil, if only the soul of the interpreter were capable of reproducing them.

"Oh, something better than that! Something better than

that!" protested the *padre* when the attempt was proposed. But Arno was insistent, and so the work was begun, and went on.

As the golden weeks slid on, the days dropping after one another like gems on a string, Arno was a-fire with inspiration, and the solemn, sweet old face with its dark pitiful eyes and strong pure mouth, its holy, pale brows and pathetic furrows grew on the canvas, and seemed to live and breathe before the gazer.

"It is hardly me," said the old man, gazing on it. "It bears witness of the genius of Arno. But you have been dreaming of St. Francis, my son."

"Yes," said Arno smiling.

Whilst they were so occupied a letter came from Mark to Arno.

"Good fellow!" said Arno as he turned the letter over before opening it, and recognized the handwriting. "He promised to let me know how things were going on at Bleach-greens."

He read the letter and put it in his pocket, and took up his brush again with some excitement visible in his countenance.

The *padre* looked at him questioningly.

"I hope the news is good," he said.

"I will show you the letter to-morrow," said Arno. "All our friends are well. There is something I have to talk to you about before you read Mark's communication; and I want to sleep on it."

Next morning when the *padre* was prepared to resume his sitting, Arno passed an arm through his and said:

"Let us go for a walk. I want to tell you something. It is a thing very hard to speak of, especially in such a lovely world as this, where God seems everywhere visible in the glory of heaven and earth. But it must out. You may have suspected that something extraordinary happened causing me to take the sudden step that has brought me here."

"I did not think about it in that way. I believed your genius had impelled you to make the change."

"Ah, I hope this dream of genius may come true! But there was something that happened to force an opportunity upon me. It was an ugly something, so ugly that, having left it all behind, I can hardly bear to drag it to the front again,—least of all in your presence, *padre*."

"What is it, my son? You alarm me."

Arno suddenly withdrew his arm from that of the old man and stood square before him with eyes fixed on his face.

"You would not have said I was likely to grow up to be a thief—not from what you knew of me as a boy here in your guardianship?"

The *padre* drew back a step and stared.

"What do you mean, Arno?" he said. "Have you lost your senses?"

"No, no, *padre*. It is a fact that I have been, that I am still under suspicion of having stolen one hundred sovereigns from Robert Montgomery's desk."

The *padre* had turned pale, and stood silent.

"This is inconceivable," he murmured at last.

"I am glad you believe it to be so," said Arno. "A friend would believe so. Colonel Stevenson believes so,—and Sara."

"And who are those who are so wrong-headed as not to believe?" asked the old man with indignation.

"Every one of my other friends except Mark. And when you hear all the story you will admit that the case looks black against me. Robert vows that the money was there, and disappeared at a certain moment, and that I only could have taken it at that moment. I know myself that it was there, for I saw it, but as to when it disappeared I have only his word."

All the particulars of the story were then detailed to the *padre* by Arno, and no more work at the portrait was done that day. They walked together or sat under the pergola at the porch discussing the matter which had puzzled so many intelligent minds during the last six months, the *padre* striving untiringly to unravel the mystery.

It was evening before the *padre* thought of enquiring at last :

Cousin Sara

"And what does Mark Montgomery say in the letter which evidently agitated you yesterday?"

"I promised to show you the letter," replied Arno.

"Read it to me rather," said the *padre*. "My eyes fail, and I have broken my spectacles."

"I will read it," said Arno, "though it will be a trial, as you will admit, when you hear it."

"Dear Arno," said the letter, "I have not forgotten my promise of letting you know how things are going here. Everybody is well, and the girls, Harvey, Hugh, and myself often speak of you affectionately. The mystery remains unsolved. My father has only spoken to me of you once since you left. He feels the whole thing deeply in his own way (you know that way), but I feel that I am bound to tell you something of the gist of that conversation, which was a curious one, as unlikely as anything else that has happened in connection with the strange occurrence which drove you from among us."

Arno paused a moment.

"Go on, my son," said the *padre*.

"My father told me," continued the letter, "that Sara Stevenson had come to him one day since you left, to enquire, on the Colonel's part and her own, into the painful matter, and to declare their belief in you."

"Good!" said the *padre*.

"My father was much surprised at Sara's taking such a step——"

"I am not surprised," interrupted the *padre*. "It is like her to stand up for a friend."

"My father put all the difficult points of the affair before her without moving her, and then—(the rest is not nice, but I feel that I ought to tell you)—he reminded her that *she* was the only other person who was open to suspicion. To his astonishment, she made no attempt to repel the suggestion that she took the money. She coloured violently, and said nothing. My father is now not sure that she may not be the guilty

person. It is all very painful, and of course will make a division between the Stevensons and ourselves."

"Monstrous!" cried the *padre*. "Why should she stoop to defend herself from such a charge?"

"It is a hideous state of things altogether," said Arno. "Sara and the Colonel separated from their friends! Why did she not speak out and defend herself?"

"To shield you," said the *padre*.

"I want no shielding," cried Arno. "It would never have occurred to me to rest under a cloud lest impossible suspicion should fall on her."

"A woman, a girl might look on a thing in that way. It is too quixotic, of course. But is it not noble?"

But Arno was too much disturbed to be able to look on this new view of things with the *padre's* eyes. To have Sara suspected was worse than being suspected himself. He was angry at her for what seemed to him unpardonable weakness.

"She has done me no good," he said. "A lie is not noble, and she is acting a lie. Suppose I were to write now and take the blame on myself in order to exculpate her!"

"I would not have you do anything of the kind," said the *padre*.

"I could not do it. Then, why did she behave so as to make me more miserable than I was before? I was beginning to get away from under the cloud into a world of my own, and now she drags me back under this cloud of hers!"

"You are not yourself at this moment, my son. Remember the astounding circumstances."

"I don't know whether they are astounding or not. I believe there has been some ridiculous blunder. Robert Montgomery says he lost one hundred sovereigns. How do I know where he has mislaid them?"

The *padre* said no more at that time, and the painting was given up for the day. Arno went for a walk that evening without asking the *padre* to accompany him. He was surprised by the passion of distress which this latest news had aroused in

himself. What did Sara mean by it? Why did she complicate matters in this cruel manner? *She* to take the money! And then it was, just as the shadows of evening fell, that a detestable thought darted into his mind. What if she had taken the money to help him with it! Had she not offered him money, saying she had plenty, gotten in a way she would one day tell him about?

When this blow struck him, Arno stood still and laughed out loud.

"I used to have commonsense," he said. "That was when I had to sit at a desk and cast up figures. Now, it seems, liberty and living all in touch with the beauty of the world have turned my brain."

A great star had risen on the horizon, palpitating with its own intense light as it hung over the olive groves and vineyards of the Casentino. As the startling sound of his own laugh died away, Arno gazed at the star, and his eyes filled with penitent tears.

"As well might that star drop into the wine-press and be extinguished," he thought, "as Sara be capable of wrong-doing or meanness, even for any good purpose whatsoever. I will go home and repent me of my wicked irritation, in the ear of the *padre*."

"But O, Sara, why did you hurt me by wanting to bear my blame?"

"I knew you would be sorry," said the *padre*. "It is a cruel trial for you both. But I pity the thief most, whoever he may be; for he is guilty."

Chapter XXX

An Unexpected Announcement

HARVEY DURRANT was dining with Sir Jonah Cunnygham, and the relations between the two seemed to be more friendly than heretofore.

"Can you enlighten me as to the cause of the coolness that has sprung up between the Stevensons and the people at Bleachgreens?" asked Sir Jonah. "The Colonel will not admit that there is any change, and Robert Montgomery is as close as an oyster. I can't enthuse, as you say, much myself about friendship and all that, but I don't like to see people parting off by different roads when they have gone together so far on the way?"

This was quite a sentimental speech for Sir Jonah, and Harvey was taken by surprise.

"Mrs. Fontaine tells me she is sure it has something to do with the disappearance of that Warrender boy, but she, also, has been kept in the dark," continued Sir Jonah.

"I believe Mrs. Fontaine has guessed correctly," said Harvey. "Robert has been disappointed in the son of his old friend, who prefers art to trade, and has run off to Italy. And the Stevensons were fond of Arno."

"I don't see why they need quarrel over it," said Sir Jonah gruffly. "Robert is an overbearing man, and it must be his fault. The boy is clever, and I like his spirit if he ran away to follow his bent. I mean to stick to the Stevensons. The Colonel is a gentleman, and the girl is the best girl I have ever

met with. Her devotion to her father has been a new light to me. I am half inclined to give her a second father by making a daughter of her myself, if I could find a man not too unworthy of her."

Harvey felt a thrill of excitement at the hint conveyed in Sir Jonah's words, but he controlled it, and said quietly :

"Sara is indeed charming. I know of no one to compare with her."

"I thought I had seen you hanging round that foolish doll, Herminia Montgomery," said the old man, with a return of his usual manner. "I don't want her for a daughter. If you can bring Sara to me here I will welcome you, but I will have nothing to do with you on any other terms."

This was an announcement quite unexpected by Harvey, although he had sometimes suspected his patron of the feeling that had led to it. He restrained the expression of his joy, and said modestly :

"You are far too good to me, sir. It will be happy for me if I can be successful in pleasing you."

"Humph !" said Sir Jonah. "I am not sure that it can be done. Maybe the girl is too wise to have anything to do with us. And I am not going to benefit her too much, either, unless she gives me something in return."

He then changed the interesting conversation abruptly, and Harvey was too prudent to make any attempt to lead him back to it, following him patiently through mazes of talk, of past and present doings in his native town, of the rise and fall of fortunes and reputations, of crises in the linen trade, of failures and successes in flax-growing, interwoven with cynical sayings and caustic remarks, the whole being a rather bitter exposition of unfaith in human nature as he had found it.

When he left Willows' Burn that night Harvey already looked on the place as his own, and felt that he had entered on a new path in life, leading to a degree of prosperity of which he had hitherto scarcely dared to dream. It was a memorable walk down the green roads and lanes to the train,

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and took place on one of those nights when at the same hour Arno and the *padre* were rambling arm and arm among the olives and vines of the Casentino.

Surely, with his acknowledged attractions and with prospects so brilliant, he should be able to win Sara, a girl so naturally affectionate, so sensible, so young, and disengaged. Her life of retirement with her father precluded the likelihood of many rivals. Mark and Hugh were good, practical fellows, but he had observed that Sara had little sympathy with their ways and views. Had Arno remained longer on the scene he might have got in the way, but he being gone, the road was clear. A thought was given to Sir Jonah's contemptuous designation of "that doll, Herminia," and he smiled as he wondered what the young lady would say if she knew of it. Herminia would be disappointed, but everyone cannot win, and it was Sara who had found favour with Sir Jonah.

After this Harvey lost no time in calling at Donegall Place, and arrived one evening just a day or two after the return of the Stevensons from Bangor. Father and daughter were glad to see him. Feeling themselves in a state of regrettable aloofness from the Montgomeries, they looked on Harvey as a link with Bleachgreens, and the sympathetic anxiety expressed by his enquiries about Arno added special warmth to the welcome accorded to him.

"I thought you would be able to tell me something about him," he said, with that charming air of affectionate solicitude which became him so well and made for him so many friends. "One cannot expect him to write many letters under his present circumstances, and his first thought would naturally be for the Colonel."

"Oh, yes, he writes," said the Colonel, "and he has lost no time. He is hard at work. I am sorry for this mysterious affair, but it has led to good results, I believe."

"It is mysterious, and painful," said Harvey, "but Arno will outlive it. Nobody could long believe seriously anything against him."

"I am glad to hear you say so," said the Colonel. "Robert Montgomery has been rather rough on him."

"He is a hasty man. But he repents," said Harvey. "A little time and silence among the very few who have known anything of the matter will wipe out all memory of it."

"And in the meantime Arno will become happy and distinguished," said Sara with a little flash of enthusiasm.

"At least he will be free from the desk, at which he chafed so bitterly," said Harvey. "I always felt that perfect freedom from all control of rules and enforced habits, even of the tie of friends, was what Arno pined for. Distinguished or not, he will follow his own will and way about the world, and be happier in his art than if he were bound by the conventionalities to a domestic life and to business."

There was silence for a minute while Sara and the Colonel asked themselves if this were an entirely true representation of Arno's character. Was friendship to him as a bondage, affection an irksome tie?

"I can't quite accept all that," said the Colonel. "I have believed him possessed of a good heart, in addition to his exceptional talents. I must wait to see proof of the contrary before I can alter my opinion."

"I should hope you would do so," said Harvey. "Of course I have seen a great deal of Arno, besides having observed a good deal of the peculiarities of the artistic temperament. Beauty and the quality of the picturesque usually stands to it for all that is worthy? But, as you say, we must suspend judgment to make way for development. Arno may prove to be a unique individuality, not to be classed as belonging to any type."

The Colonel felt that he could not but own the fairness of Harvey's views, and was uncomfortably aware of latent uneasiness as to his own instinct with regard to character, and the true value of his powers of appreciation. These practical "business" men, were they after all more wide-awake in apprehending truth in the common things of life?

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When Harvey had gone the Colonel said a few words to Sara suggestive of such ideas.

"Harvey's theory about the artistic temperament merely amused me," said Sara. "What does he know about it? I have some idea that a bank note is to him the most beautiful work of art ever created. To be 'practical' in the eyes of the world means, I believe, to be keen for money, to be ready to trample on delicate things in the stampede to reach 'prosperity.'"

"You don't appear to be exactly 'amused,'" said the Colonel smiling.

"But I am," said Sara laughing. "It is so audacious, that claim of selfish people to be the wise of the human race. Are you and I less likely to be able to distinguish between the coarse and the fine, the fickle and faithful, because we are not engaged from morning till night in turning a big profit for ourselves on the hard labour of our fellow-creatures?"

"Well, dear, don't get into a passion about it. We have nailed our colours to Arno's mast. I don't think you will ask to haul them down to sail smooth with Harvey Durrant, even though he is a charming fellow."

Sara coloured a little at the hint she thought she perceived under her father's words, but she held her head high, and reassured herself that she was not going to allow any self-sensitiveness to deprive her of the faculty of speaking up fearlessly in defence of an absent friend.

That Harvey was a charming fellow she felt more keenly than her father, also that he was taking especial pains to impress her with his attractions. As his visits became frequent, she noticed, however, that her father, who loved the companionship of a younger man than himself, admitted Durrant more and more to his favour and confidence. It also occurred to her to wonder that Harvey spoke very little of the people at Bleachgreens. To her questions as to the welfare of these mutual friends, he would say:

"Oh, they are all well, but really I see very little of the family. I am so much with Sir Jonah in the evenings."

"I am glad you are on such good terms with him," said the Colonel.

"Yes, he is sometimes a little crotchety, even with those he cares for most. I am happy to say he begins to look on me as a son."

"That is as it should be," said the Colonel. "He is a lonely old man, and a son might make him happy."

As autumn changed to winter, Harvey's visits became even more frequent, and in the long evenings the Colonel looked forward with pleasure to an hour of his company in the workshop. The still unperfected work of the invention had been put aside during the summer months, and was now fallen back upon to give interest to the hours of the dark season. Durrant's interest in this fad of the Colonel's had steadily increased, and he began to show an intelligent understanding of the matter which gratified the inventor. Then he was always anxious to hear news of Arno, whose letters were despatched regularly from the garret in Florence. Harvey was certainly growing in favour with both the Colonel and Sara, and also, it appeared, with Sir Jonah, who sometimes dropped in, and seemed pleased in his peculiar way when he found Harvey with the Stevensons, but who was never admitted to the secrets of the workshop.

He also became more and more desirous of seeing Sara and her father at Willows' Burn, and his invitations to them were frequent and pressing as the winter moved along.

Chapter XXXI

Harvey's Opportunity

As Christmas drew near the Stevensons began to feel the estrangements from old friends more keenly than ever, and when Sir Jonah urged their acceptance of his invitation to spend Christmas Day and the holidays at Willows' Burn, the Colonel, after a little hesitation, yielded.

Sara would have preferred to stay at home.

"Dear Daddy, we can have a nice little Christmas all by ourselves," she said. "Willows' Burn does not seem a Christmas sort of place somehow."

"Well, little daughter, I have an odd, lonely kind of feeling. I am sorry about Robert Montgomery."

Sara thought he would be more angry than sorry if he knew of some things Robert had said to her on that day of her visit to Bleachgreens. But she had never told him, and did not intend to tell him.

"Mrs. Fontaine would come and dine with us."

"Sir Jonah says she will come to Willows' Burn if we come."

Sara saw that he looked wistful. It was not like him to give way to depression.

"Daddy dear, I will go, if you wish it. But you and Sir Jonah don't agree very well when you talk much about people and things. And Mrs. Fontaine will fight with you both. Dear old darling that she is, she never thinks she is doing her duty unless she is scolding someone!"

"Who is it that has said 'dissension is better than loneliness?'"

"I don't want to know. I can't bear people who succeed in getting their fallacies accepted as truths."

"You will be at war with a large part of the world, then," said the Colonel. "But I allow that this is, if not a fallacy, very superficial as a truth. The point is, however, that if I go to Willows' Burn I will try to behave decently to my host, little Sara."

"O, Daddy, forgive me! I know how you will humour him. And I should really like to go, if I thought you would enjoy it."

And so they went.

Sir Jonah had made really wonderful efforts to give a festive appearance to the grandly grim, solitary house, the formal apartments of which, though luxuriously furnished, had usually an uninhabited air. When the Stevensons arrived on the day before Christmas Eve, they found Harvey already installed as a guest for the holidays, and it was proposed that he and Sara should undertake to put up the customary Christmas decorations of holly, and mistletoe, and ivy. The park was ransacked for choice wreaths and clusters of berries, and Sara, glad of something stirring in hours so stagnant, threw herself into the task with a zest that further added to Sir Jonah's appreciation of her qualities. The gaunt hall became a bower, and the solemn dining room like a forest haunt of hospitable fairies, while the drawing-room, usually so prim and stately, bloomed into a midsummer flower garden. While Sara worked away, arranging all with exquisite taste, Harvey did the heavy parts of the task, and made the best of his opportunity for drawing nearer to her in sympathy and winning upon her warmer regard. The Colonel had his chair wheeled from room to room as the work went on, watching all with pleasure, and Sir Jonah looked in occasionally with growls of satisfaction. When Mrs. Fontaine arrived, she put on her spectacles and gazed around in speechless astonishment, saying as soon as she found her voice :

"Well, upon my word, this is a transformation !"

Then she glanced from Harvey, handsome and devoted, holding up a long wreath, to Sara, radiant, leaning from a top rung of the library ladder to take it from him, and said "Humph!" but it would have been difficult to guess from her face and voice whether pleasure or the reverse had given emphasis to that odd ejaculation which is so difficult to spell and has so many various meanings.

The Christmas dinner passed off very much as Sara had predicted. Sir Jonah denounced most things and most people in his native town, past and present; Mrs. Fontaine scolded him for his uncharitable-mindedness, at the same time herself giving away the present to a great extent, but holding valiantly by the past; while the Colonel, true to his promise to Sara, strove to act as peace-maker, and received a few rebuffs for his pains.

"Now, George, what do you know about it? You left your native country as a youth, and we had to get on without you. At the best you are a mere soldier, trained to cut your fellow-creatures in pieces," cried Mrs. Fontaine, and the next moment she was filled with remorse, when the Colonel replied with a little laugh:

"I think it has rather been the other way about," with a glance downward at the chair containing his own fore-shortened figure.

"Don't mind me, George. You know I am a born shrew, and you are a brave man. But you know this Jonah always puts me in a passion. We were boy and girl together, and we know how to fight without being enemies. There he is now, a local millionaire, and he doesn't build a temperance hall or a library, or endow a hospital, or put up almshouses, with an allowance per week to the inmates. I have been giving him his choice of these works for years past, but nothing moves him. He allows us poor grubbing creatures to go on rooting about, trying to do something without funds."

"I don't hold with it," said Sir Jonah. "It is the scoundrels that always get the benefit of such costly providings. I have my own notions, Madam, as you have."

Cousin Sara

"Live and let live, Mrs. Fontaine," said Harvey, with an indulgent smile.

"O, you young man! When I was a girl, young men were of a different pattern. They had cultivated tastes, their literature was not all of the racecourse. They had high ideals."

"A good mark for you, Sir Jonah!" said Sara, with an arch glance from the old lady to her ancient playfellow.

"There, I confess I have blundered," said Mrs. Fontaine laughing. "Sara, you are too quick for me. But I maintain that even my friend Sir Jonah had his good points. He used to bring me sweets to the dancing-school—that was before we grew up, of course; and he once sent me a valentine—that was before he became a woman-hater."

"I wish I could send a valentine," said Harvey. "Perhaps Sir Jonah will show me how it was done."

"Nobody sends valentines now," snapped Mrs. Fontaine. "It would be too ridiculous, considering the spirit of the age. No; that is not what I mean. There is too much sport, too much racecourse, no poetry, no tender feeling."

"Too much scolding," growled Sir Jonah, glaring at his old friend, who shook her spectacles at him, but desisted, and began to drink her coffee.

"I'm the only person who has escaped," said Sara, leaning forward to smile in her old friend's face. "Haven't you a word for me, too? I feel left out of the fun of it?"

"Oh, I have a rod in pickle for you, too, young lady, but I will keep it for your private ear."

And then Sara's mock distress at being kept in suspense and her guesses as to her probable misconduct caused some laughter, and the conversation trickled away into channels less dangerous, at least for Harvey, who had been feeling uncomfortable when it ran in the direction of the racecourse. He fancied that Sir Jonah's eye was upon him, while in reality the old gentleman was occupied in admiring Sara, being won into good humour by the sweetness of her lively efforts to keep the ball of talk rolling till it should drop into a pleasanter groove.

A week passed, and Harvey did not feel that he had made all that progress with Sara which he had hoped for. She was quite kind and friendly, but something in her manner warned him off whenever his mood became in the least tender or sentimental. Every night he asked himself in what he had failed. He admired Sara, thought her sweeter of countenance and finer of character than any other girl he had known, but he did not love her with the love that gives inspiration to the lover, teaching tact to awkwardness, and lending eloquence to a stammering tongue. He was aware of this, and did not deny to himself that the wooing of a Herminia Montgomery would have been an easier and pleasanter undertaking to him than the pursuit of this keen-witted and independent maiden. But it had to be done. Sir Jonah was observing his delay with impatience, and Harvey was becoming nervously anxious to conclude the matrimonial arrangements which were to be the conditions of his inheritance. He gave much thought as to the opportune moment, and the words and looks to be expected from a lover whose whole heart was in his suit. Another difficulty in his way was the fact that Sara was almost inseparable from her father, sitting or walking by his chair, whether the two were alone together or in the company of others.

At last one day when, after luncheon, Sara had withdrawn from a heated discussion still going on at the table among her elders, Harvey followed her, and waited in the picture gallery, through which she would pass in returning from her own room. He had been cultivating a sympathy with her love of art, and reckoned on it to help him; and Sara, when she appeared, did not disappoint him, being always ready to have another look at her favourite pictures, and to talk about the painters.

So ready was she indeed, that he found it difficult to lead the conversation in the direction he desired, and was obliged at last to make a rather abrupt effort to return from the land and the days of Titian and Raffaële to present times and present company.

"What a delightful thing it is to possess a collection like this! Should you not like to have it for your own?"

"No," said Sara. "I don't feel that I should care for it."

"O, inconstant woman!" said Harvey. "You like, and you don't like."

"I must tell you what I mean. I don't want to have all these pictures stored up within my own walls, where no one sees them but myself and a few privileged persons. I like to go and see great pictures in galleries where everyone comes to enjoy them. Such great works belong to the world at large. I could not bear to withhold from anyone the inheritance of a right to enjoy them."

"But what power you would have to give pleasure!"

"I'd rather do it some other way. I can't bear to imprison anything that ought to have its own freedom in the world. I always feel sorry when I see a bird in a cage, remembering that the woods are robbed of its song. And as to the pictures, I want to have them left in the ancient churches, and monasteries, and palaces which they were painted to enrich. These make the proper settings for them, known and studied by the artists as background and surrounding for their creations."

Harvey was puzzled. Sara's thought eluded his desire, as a fly buzzing up and down a pane escapes the cat watching to pounce on it. He made another brave attempt to bring her mind a little more into touch with his own.

"If this house were yours," he said softly, "with all its contents, and with the fortune that attaches to its possession, you might do what you liked with the pictures—let all the birds fly."

"If?" said Sara laughing. "That is a state of things that could never be, and which I should not wish to be."

"Should you not like a place like this for your home?"

"My ideal of a home is quite different. A great house, with all its ponderous, conventional machinery, would weigh on my spirits. My joy would be to live in a little house in

Italy, say like the *padre's* house in the Casentino, at the heart of a glorious nature, within reach of the splendours and loveliness of art in their own distinguished places, for which they were born, so to speak" said Sara, beginning to laugh at her own eloquence.

Harvey was again at fault, but was not to be baffled.

"You might have the house in Italy, too," he said. "You are wrong in saying that you could never be owner of such a house as this. If you will be my wife, Sara, Sir Jonah will give us all these beautiful things, he will——"

"But that is just the state of things that could never be," said Sara gently. "I have no intention of marrying, and," she added, with a sly touch of humour, "I am sure Sir Jonah will give you all the fine things without the condition of such a partnership."

"You are hard on me, Sara. I love you, and will do my best to make you happy."

"I am grateful to you for that wish, and for your generosity in desiring to share all the good things with me. But I am already engaged."

"To whom?" asked Harvey, startled and jealous.

"To my father," said Sara smiling. "I could not throw him over, even for you and Titian, and Raffaële, and Leonardo."

"You need not part from him. There is room in this house for all."

"We have got a house of our own, you see," said Sara, "and it is good enough for us. Don't look so vexed. I am really sorry."

"Oh, do think about it," said Harvey. "You can't imagine how much it means to me."

"Not so much as you think," said Sara. "Put it all out of your mind, for I shall never change."

Here Mrs. Fontaine appeared, coming into the gallery with her spectacles on as if ready for the pictures, but in reality prepared for a swift, keen glance at the two young people so deep in earnest conversation.

"Sara," she said, "the tea is waiting for you. The Colonel is as dependent on his afternoon cup as any woman. I should have poured it out for him if I dared, but I knew that your hand on the pot is necessary to sweeten it."

Harvey stood sullenly silent, while Sara, with a little smile at him, moved away with the old lady, thankful for the interruption.

"Sara Stevenson, I hope you haven't been engaging yourself to marry Harvey Durrant?" said Mrs. Fontaine, when they had left the gallery.

"Why not, dear friend?" asked Sara. "What objection do you make to him?"

"He is too handsome, too weak, and too diplomatic for my taste," said the old lady.

"What funny faults!" said Sara. "I shouldn't mind them if I cared for him."

"But you don't care for him."

"I don't—not much. And he doesn't care for me, which is the best of it. At all events, I am married already."

"What?"

"I am married to one Colonel Stevenson."

"You naughty child. You gave me a fright. Now I shall enjoy my tea. But poor Harvey Durrant, I am sorry for him."

"You needn't. He thought to bribe me with Sir Jonah's house and things, especially his pictures. I am not of a covetous disposition. I can bear to see my friend Harvey in possession of Willows' Burn without any desire to share it with him."

"Don't he wish he may get it!" said Mrs. Fontaine. "Sir Jonah is a man to keep a grip upon what is his own."

Chapter XXXII

Kitty Canavan's Book

WHEN the Christmas guests had departed, Harvey remained alone with the host at Willows' Burn, anxious to get away with his defeat unconfessed, yet unwilling to hasten, for other prudential reasons. He wondered whether Sir Jonah was aware of what had passed between him and Sara, hoping he had been too pre-occupied for such observation. But Sir Jonah did not leave him long in suspense. On the very evening of the departure of the Stevensons, the old gentleman opened a momentous conversation.

"Well," he said, "I have given you a good opportunity, haven't I? What is the result?"

Harvey hesitated.

"Do I understand?" he began nervously.

"Yes, you do, thoroughly. What has the young lady been saying to you? Has your suit been successful?"

"Not quite—not altogether. Sara is devoted to her father at present."

"I see," said Sir Jonah grimly. "You needn't say any more about her reasons for refusing you."

"I do not consider it final, sir."

"I do, however. She is a girl of character. She knows her own mind. Even for her father's sake she will not refuse the man who is worthy of her when he comes."

"You are very severe, Sir Jonah."

"Well, I have had my own opinion of you, based on my

own observations. But I said to myself that a girl like Sara Stevenson might have a truer instinct than mine. I have pinned my faith on her intuitions. I can see that she will have nothing to do with you. I do not go so far as that. I will not wash my hands of you all at once. I intend to continue your allowance for five years to come, and during that time I shall expect you to establish a solid position for yourself with the Montgomeries. You are a favourite there. Robert Montgomery believes in you. The ladies find you attractive. If they take you up and make you one of the family, you will have no further need of assistance from me. You had better see to it, for at the end of five years I will have nothing more to do with you."

Harvey listened aghast, but he took his sentence in silence, reflecting that long before the five years expired Sir Jonah might be influenced by a new caprice. And he parted from his host the next morning in the most amiable manner, cheerfully expressing gratitude for past kindness, with a hope that the reasonableness of Robert Montgomery's belief in him might yet be made evident to Sir Jonah.

Though of late so devoted to the Stevensons, Harvey had not failed to keep up his position of favourite at Bleachgreens, and now he became more assiduous than ever in his attendance on Jane Montgomery and her daughters. Neither would he, however, give up all hope of winning Sara's greater favour, and he continued to pay occasional calls at Donegall Place, where Sara and the Colonel received him with their usual friendliness.

"It is good-natured of him to come," Sara said. "I was afraid he might have been hurt, for I could not help smiling."

"Do not hurt him further, however," said the Colonel.

"No fear of that, I think," said Sara. "All the hurt is to his pride."

"Sara!"

"Now, Daddy, he has no great care for me. It is something else. And if he has recovered so fast as to come here in

so friendly a manner, he will not suffer a second time. As he has overcome that pride, it will not return upon him now."

"I am afraid you have been taking lessons from Sir Jonah in the art of making caustic speeches," said the Colonel laughing. "I must not take you to Willows' Burn again."

He had been half inclined to regret for Sara's sake that she was not more attracted by one whom everybody else found so attractive. He had developed a considerable amount of liking for Durrant himself, and he thought the young man quite of the character to captivate a girl's fancy, while his worldly prospects appeared to be excellent. But for all these suggestions in favour of Harvey's suit, Colonel Stevenson was glad at heart that his daughter preferred to remain exclusively his own possession.

Meanwhile he did not share Sara's opinion as to Harvey's feeling towards herself. It seemed to him impossible that if a young man cared for such a girl as Sara at all he should love her lightly, and he sympathized with her accordingly. To relieve the situation, he invited him more freely than ever into the workshop, and was charmed with Durrant's increased interest in, and understanding of the beloved invention which was now really on the point of completion, or seemed so to the anxious inventor. Harvey was inclined, however, still to hold him back from the important step of patenting. It was desirable to be quite sure of the perfection of the work, lest an afterthought should come too late for him, occurring to the mind of some clever pirate who might out-patent him on the ground of a new improvement.

The Colonel had not imagined such a danger, and was struck by Harvey's thoughtfulness in his interests.

"You ought to understand these matters," he said. "I confess I have not much business experience, though I have a few ideas. I will follow your advice, and take another year to bring the thing to maturity. And I must impress on you more than ever not to say a word of it all to Robert Montgomery.

It gives me some pleasure to think how I shall take him by surprise."

After this conclusion had been arrived at, Harvey's visits became less frequent, and the Stevensons, moving to the Glens of Antrim, saw him no more during an interval of some summer months.

Sara was not sorry to see her father taking this matter of the completion and patenting of his invention in so leisurely a manner, feeling that when all was done he would probably find himself wanting in an interest and an occupation. While the thing was still in progress there was a sense of movement and of expectation, which might fail in case the cherished scheme finally should not answer in every particular to his hopes. She had begun to realize what a strong hold this thing had taken upon his life, and how deep would be his disappointment if failure lay in wait for him. She herself was not capable of judging of probabilities in the matter, but it seemed to her that Durrant's wish to retard the final steps which would tend to put the invention to the test looked a little suggestive of possible misfortune. Harvey had, on the whole, taken her unkindness with good humour, and she was inclined to look on him with a certain return of favour. His sympathy had been pleasant to the Colonel, who had always trusted his amiability, and of late had grown to believe in his intelligence on points all-important. He could have no reason but the best for advising the delay of the patenting of the Stevenson invention for simplifying labour in the spinning mills.

Sara sometimes wondered whether or not such doubts of the hoped-for success did not visit the inventor as he sat in his chair on the terrace of the old house in the Glen under the purple shadow of the mountains, looking away to the blue distance of the sea. She knew his patient philosophic spirit well enough to suppose that he would take disappointment calmly and not grieve too much over failure. But all things considered, she did not regret that circumstances seemed to require delay, and that there was still to be an interval of

peace and pleasant expectation before her father launched himself into the excitement of publication and patenting, and of proving the value of the result of his years of ingenuity and effort.

In the magical atmosphere of glen and mountain, all the sweets of last summer seemed to return, and Arno was with them in spirit, glad in his first awakening to the joy of personal freedom with the continued presence of sympathetic friends. That was just before the shadow of a great trial had fallen upon him.

"I think a little time of happiness was allotted for him to strengthen him for what was coming," said Sara, "the misfortune which was to open a way to higher things in life."

"It looks like it," said the Colonel. "The light on those clouds above the hilltop brings back the boy's face to me returning from his morning climb, like Moses coming down from the mountain. It forces me to feel more than ever assured that Arno is incapable of a mean or a dishonest action, even to attain to the realization of his dearest hopes and desires."

"Strange that evil should lead to so much good!" said Sara. "Are Good and Evil two pilgrims travelling through a wood, and do they help although they hate each other? Does Good say to Evil, 'Lead me a bit of the way on your lines that I may find a new path of my own beyond you?' And when Evil complies, does Good drag his enemy into his own paths so that Evil loses his way and continues to follow Good?"

"Your theories must move warily," said the Colonel, "for we may not join hands with evil that good may come of it."

Arno's letters arrived at intervals, full of hope and courage, with details as to the progress of his works, his daily life, and his intercourse with the *padre*. The portrait proceeded, but gradually, for he worked on it only in moments when inspiration seemed borne to him from the spirit of the dear old saint himself, who was, nevertheless, unconscious of conveying anything but the most ordinary impressions of a sitter to an

artist. "It is far the best thing I have produced," wrote Arno, "and a great part of my hope is staked on it."

Sara wrote the replies, part dictated by the Colonel and part by herself, so that Arno became really a sharer in their daily life. The reading of choice books, containing the best thought of the day, was also one of their foremost pleasures, besides which Sara had a little joy of her own hidden away in her desk in her little old brown room with its windows letting in the pictures of glen and mountain, so rich in colour and so changeful in their radiant lights and dewy shadows. Linked with this hidden joy was the appearance of a certain book which arrived one day in the box with a number of other volumes sent from a library. Sara trembled when she saw it, and placed it on a high shelf in her sanctum. But after a day or two it seemed to speak to her, and demand to be taken down and brought under the notice of her father.

She came to him at last with this book held downward, almost hidden in the folds of her muslin dress, and waited to dispose of a sudden blush before she said lightly :

"They have sent us a fairy tale. I wonder if they think we are children."

"Perhaps we are," said the Colonel. "How nice of them to pay us such a compliment !"

He took the volume on his knees and turned it over.

"It looks pretty, and the illustrations might have been drawn in our glens. Let us try the story. Modern fairy tales are not too plentiful, and, if good, might be refreshing."

"A funny thing is," said Sara, "that the author is one Kitty Canavan—nurse's namesake."

"Looks as if she were a country woman of ours. Well, Kitty can't expect to have a monopoly of the name. I hope, for her sake, it is a creditable performance."

Here Kitty herself appeared, coming with an extra rug for the Colonel's chair, as she fancied the afternoon air was slightly chill.

"There's a mist in the glen," she said. "It isn't the size of

my apron yet, but it'll maybe grow bigger when the sun gets near the hills."

"Well, Kitty," said the Colonel, "I find you have been writing a book."

Kitty started guiltily and looked at Sara, who gave her a warning glance.

"Oh, aye, maybe so," said Kitty. "Sure the world is full of books. An' why wouldn't I be writin' one? As well me as another."

"Why, indeed?" said the Colonel. "I think it is very creditable to you with all you have to do besides."

"It didn't give me much trouble," said Kitty. "Sure it was easier on me nor darnin' stockings."

"You're clever enough for anything," said the Colonel. "Bring your knitting out here and Miss Sara will read us the story."

"Don't I know every word of it?" said Kitty. "Sure how could I help when I wrote it all myself?"

The Colonel laughed and declared she had a ready humour. And Kitty placed her seat on the terrace a little behind her master's chair, and set her needles going, with every intention of hearing the familiar story re-read aloud by Sara.

"Very good indeed!" said the Colonel after a few pages had been read. "Kitty, I congratulate you."

Kitty shook her head, and her needles went on flying more rapidly than usual.

After half-an-hour's reading the Colonel spoke again.

"It is really very pretty," he said. "It reminds me a little of a charming old book, *The Pathway of the Fawn*, which I read when I was a boy."

Kitty nodded. "It's on the nursery shelf still. Miss Sara was always very fond of it. I was fonder myself of *The White Cat* and *Jack, the Giant-killer*, but Miss Sara got tired of them."

Mrs. Canavan here received another glance of warning from her nursling.

"Oh, well," she said, "I'm going to hold my tongue;" and she went on with her knitting.

When the story came to an end the Colonel declared that he was charmed.

"It is really clever," he said, "though I do think the author has been reading the book I mentioned. Quite natural, Kitty, as you have it on the nursery shelf. And there is really an atmosphere of our Glen about it all. When they were sitting under the spray of the waterfall I quite felt it."

"Then you don't think it is at all original, Daddy?" said Sara.

"What is original?" asked the Colonel. "Is anything original in these days, even the guesses of science?"

Just then the evening post brought a London literary paper containing a laudatory notice of the fairy tale by Kitty Canavan in such terms as would lead readers among far-off hills, unaccustomed to such pronouncements, to suppose that the whole world might soon be expected to ring with the fame of the author of the book in question.

"Kitty," said the Colonel, "this is very gratifying. I congratulate you on having won such distinction from your modest retirement. We shall have visitors from all parts coming here to look at you."

"Then I won't hold my tongue any longer," burst forth Kitty. "Miss Sara, I can't stand it. Do you think, sir, that I'm goin' to take the credit of Miss Sara's book from her?"

"I don't understand," said the Colonel.

"Sure, didn't she write every word of it herself? And to put it on the like of me——!"

The Colonel stared, and laughed.

"What is the meaning of it, Sara? Is this true?"

"Now, don't be vexed, Daddy. There is no harm done, is there?"

"Harm, little daughter? Why, I think it is delightful. So this is what has come of your scribblings! Give me the

book and let me look at it. I shall want to read it all over again now for myself."

"I'm glad it's off my mind anyhow," said Kitty, gathering up her needles and wools. "I couldn't have died with it on my conscience—after deceiving the very master himself—takin' the credit from his own child."

"You may sleep soundly to-night then, Kitty," said the Colonel with another laugh of amusement. "You have made restitution, and can die when you please."

"I won't die till I'm ready, howsomever," muttered Kitty as she impaled her ball of wool on her needles and took her departure.

"Dear old woman!" said Sara, looking after the sturdy figure trudging towards the house. "She believes you were in earnest. You can't think how relieved she is. And truly she had some part in the authorship of the story. If she had had my education she could have put it all together much better than I have done."

"I never quite looked on Kitty in that light before," said the Colonel. "I shall take her on your word, and cultivate even more respect than ever for her qualities in the future. And now, I want to know when it was and how it was that my little girl took it into her head to be an author."

"It would puzzle Kitty and me to say that," said Sara. "I have been telling stories to her and the dolls ever since I could speak. She used to punish me for telling fibs when first she caught me relating things that never had happened. After a while she got interested in my fancies, and when she found that they were material for a book there was no limit to her admiration and sympathy."

"I am astonished at your energy and your power of reserve," said the Colonel, "even more than at your literary gift and impulse. To think of your having quietly carried your inventive plans through to completion silently and unobtrusively, while I have not yet done the like with my

own, notwithstanding all the sympathy and help I have been receiving from others."

"Now, Daddy, don't make ridiculous comparisons. You are doing a big work to benefit the world. I have been pottering with pen and ink to please myself. I should have told you before if I had been sure you would have liked it. Now that I know you will take pleasure in it, I will turn out my desk for your amusement."

"Of course I shall like it," said the Colonel.

Chapter XXXIII

Herminia

HERMINIA MONTGOMERY had suffered some uneasiness during the period of Harvey's particular devotion to the Stevensons following on the Christmas spent in their company at Willows' Burn. A rumour of his frequent visits to Donegall Place had reached her, and all his flattering attentions to herself had failed to please her while she suspected that they were shared by another. After the departure of Sara with her father to the Glens, however, this cloud on her sunshine was lifted, Harvey having evidently no intention of following them, and becoming more and more assiduous in his visits to Bleachgreens.

Herminia, a beauty bred in prosperity, had grown to a physically perfect womanhood, believing that such a one as she is the pivot on which the world turns, that the charms with which she is dowered are an inheritance by which she is queen among her fellow-creatures. Nothing appeared wanting to complete her empire save extension of her dominion, and, after her very earliest conquests had been made and despised, some time had been spent in fretting for yet more worlds to conquer. Herminia was secretly convinced that had her lines of life been laid in London or Paris, with *carte blanche* at her milliners, some prince or potentate in Europe would have hastened to place his splendours at her disposal. Compared with such a fate, her position in the modest and comparatively narrow social circle

in which she moved was hardly satisfactory, and she resented the freakishness of Nature in planting her in her little-distinguished, if respectable and luxurious, home of Bleach-greens. Linen was a good clean trade, but still it was trade, and Herminia at seventeen had been aspiring to a coronet. At twenty-three, however, she had begun to understand difficulties and unlikelihoods, and the time had now come when she had resolved to make the best of what was attainable within the limits of her environment. Harvey Durrant's admiration, which had been taken some years ago as a matter of course and of but little importance, had now become desirable, seeing that he was recognized among his friends as the heir of the wealthy Sir Jonah Cunnygham and future owner of Willows' Burn. It was to be regretted that he could not succeed to the baronetcy which had been conferred on Sir Jonah's grandfather as a conspicuous citizen on the occasion of some Royal visit to his native town. Herminia secretly hoped, however, that wealth and importance would lead to Harvey's securing a title on his own account, and she already thought of herself as Lady Durrant. Her mother, who understood her perfectly, entered into all her views, and was accustomed to treat Harvey as a son of the house. Sharing her daughter's disapproval of his late preference of the society of the Stevensons, she also was pleased when they departed for the Glens, and busied herself in making plans for the encouragement of Durrant's wooing, inviting Sir Jonah to meet him at her table, and devising little country excursions to give the lover an opportunity of declaring himself.

Thus encouraged, Harvey showed himself delightfully ready to respond to expectations which in every respect were agreeable to his own humour. One evening he found Herminia alone in Jane's rose-garden among the late summer roses, a fitting figure for such surroundings—face of flower-like loveliness, graceful form clothed in faintly rose-tinted muslins. Never was a sordid and common-place spirit enshrined in



a shell more suggestive of delicacy and tenderness. Harvey really felt that fate had been kind to him, at all events in the matter of reserving Herminia for him as a bride rather than Sara Stevenson.

Of such a situation as this he was master. They examined the roses together, and decided on one in particular as excelling all the others. This being done, Harvey asked to have the rose plucked and given to him, making a little speech expressing the hope which he should build on Herminia's compliance with this simple request. After a little charming hesitation the rose was dropped into his hand, and the next morning Herminia informed her mother that she was engaged to be married to Harvey Durrant.

"I think you have done very well," said Jane. "I do not know any other young man with such prospects."

"Oh, that is of no consequence," said Herminia, resolved to build a little becoming romance on the basis of the rose-garden. "I should be happy with Harvey if he had not a penny."

"How do you know he has got a penny?" said Robert Montgomery, who was not so elated at the news his wife conveyed to him as she had expected to find him.

"I can't think what you mean," said Jane. "Sir Jonah Cunnygham's heir."

"Is he Sir Jonah's heir? I am not at all sure of it. I have thought the old man rather cool with him of late."

"Then you must try to ascertain," said Jane, alarmed. "I will not tell Herminia of your doubts till you have talked to Sir Jonah."

Robert had his own reasons for considering the matter important, and lost no time in acting on his wife's practical suggestion.

"Durrant has proposed to Herminia," said Robert to Sir Jonah, "and she is inclined to accept him."

"Indeed," said the old gentleman. "A good thing for him. You will take him as partner into the business, I suppose."

"I don't know at all. That would altogether depend. Trade is depressed, and not likely to mend. I have my own sons to help me to carry on the work. They will be my partners. The taking of another would quite depend on the capital he could bring into the firm."

Sir Jonah chuckled. "I don't see Harvey bringing you capital," he said.

Robert was silent. Sir Jonah was so odd, there was no knowing what he might mean.

Sir Jonah observed him narrowly.

"You have always made a favourite of him, thought him clever, and devoted to you. I should have expected you to look on him as an acquisition to the firm, and, as your son-in-law, to be treated in an exceptional manner."

Robert held up his head.

"Come, now, Sir Jonah," he said, "you must tell me exactly what you mean. You know very well that you have been making a son of Harvey Durrant, and allowing every one to suppose that he was to be your heir."

"I know nothing of the kind," said Sir Jonah. "He is no relative of mine. His grand-mother treated me badly. If she had married me, as she promised to do, I might have been a different man, and her son would be my heir. As it is, my only revenge has been to help on another man's son to push for himself in the world. I have shown Durrant my countenance, and given him an allowance to enable him to live like a gentleman until such time as he should be able to gain an established position for himself. Had his qualities been as attractive to me as they are to you and the ladies, I might have done still more. But as matters stand, I have no responsibility with regard to him."

"I am astonished," said Robert. "Evidently the young man has been in a false position all along."

"Looks like it," said Sir Jonah. "You have been regarding him as my heir—a prospectively wealthy man. I have been led to believe that you encouraged him as an expectant

partner who would one day distinguish himself and extend your business, doing honour to the name of Montgomery."

"Then you mean to do absolutely nothing for him?"

"I will continue to give him the little income he enjoys for the next five years to come. The young people can take a cottage and live in it (if they are attached to each other) for those first years, and by the end of that time you will probably see your way to taking a son-in-law into your firm."

Robert stood silent, facing the disappointment that awaited those concerned in this crisis.

"You are a hard man, Sir Jonah!" he said after a bitter pause.

"I have found the world hard," said the old man, "and hardness in return has been my strength. The people who profess to be soft are the real hard ones. If you meet them with softness you are trampled by them while they look dissolved in amiability. Now, you are a man with whom smiles and sweet manners are found to pay."

Robert turned away. He had sounded the waters of Sir Jonah's philosophy with their occasional surface suggestions of saving depths, and he had scraped a stony bottom.

"Well, I will bid you good-day, Sir Jonah. Much good may riches do you in your selfishness and solitude!"

Sir Jonah laughed and held out his hand.

"Ay, Robert," he said. "It's a case of diamond cut diamond between us. Don't I know that your trade is increasing every year by leaps and bounds? Can't we remain friends without my money going into the gaping mouth of your mills? It's nobody's affair but my own what I'm going to do with it."

Robert said, "Of course, of course!" But it was a limp hand with which he touched Sir Jonah's extended fingers.

When this interview was reported to Jane she was incredulous, was sure that Robert had mismanaged the old gentleman, made him angry, provoked him to say things which he never could have meant to convey. She talked of going to him herself, but such a step was absolutely forbidden by her husband.

"He was quite in earnest. If anything further is to be done it must be by Harvey himself. We have all been under a misapprehension. I do not know that anything more than that can be said. But it is plain that they cannot marry to live upon air. I am sorry for Herminia."

Jane knew her husband too well to venture to argue with him further. She informed her daughter at once of the state of affairs that she might be prepared to receive Harvey at their next meeting with her mind made up.

Herminia received the startling news with a placidity which was surprising even to the mother who had trained her.

"It is only a money-squabble between men. I will go to Sir Jonah," she said with a self-satisfied smile which declared "I know he will not be able to resist me."

The next day Herminia donned her most bewitching attire and set out for Willows' Burn.

"Those smiles would conquer twenty Sir Jonahs," said her mother admiringly as she surveyed her before departure. "And that delicate blue is so becoming to you, darling!"

When Herminia returned, the dainty blue of her dress was still there, but the smiles were gone.

"He is made of flint stone," she said, "but do not bother about me. It is merely a case of breaking off the engagement. If Harvey is to have no money, of course we are not able to marry."

Jane was much the more disturbed of the two. The shock to Herminia's vanity in being resisted by Sir Jonah had been great, but she comforted herself on her way home by the reflection that he was the first man who had ever so slighted her. For the rest, Harvey had been very much to blame in not having assured himself of his position before speaking to her. She was not a girl to be trifled with in that way. She would tell him so, gently, and would not quarrel with him. One could not yet be sure how things would end. She would ask him to continue to give her his friendship, but there could be no engagement.

Robert had expected tears and pleadings, and, though relieved on the main point, he was a little disappointed.

“There used to be more ardour about these matters,” he said to his wife. “But I must say Herminia does you credit as a sensible woman.”

Harvey had to endure a succession of private interviews with Robert, with Jane, and finally with Herminia. And after all were over he found himself sitting alone in his rooms at the mills in sullen and desperate mood, pondering his chances of doing something to regain a footing of importance in his circle, and of climbing by an easy bound the ladder to prosperity.

Chapter XXXIV

“He has held me back”

THE months flew past pleasantly with Sara and her father in their glen. Some old friends of the Stevenson family were scattered here and there about the country within driving distance, and occasional social meetings prevented solitude from becoming irksome. Boxes of books came from a library, and the reading and criticising of the newest was a daily interest. The promised turning out of Sara's desk also gave pleasure and amusement to the Colonel, while Sara's busy brain had time for the encouragement of fresh fancies and for digestion of the lessons supplied her by her late experiences. It was tacitly understood by both that the aloofness necessitated by miles of distance from the Montgomeries was preferable to that caused merely by misunderstanding. In Sara this feeling was perhaps even stronger than in the Colonel, who believed that Robert's angry mistaken judgment of Arno, and his own determination to trust in the boy's good faith and integrity, made the sole foundation of that coldness which had sprung up between friends once so warm and so familiar.

That he should remain under this impression was Sara's desire. She felt that did he know of the alternative put before her by Robert, the suggested possibility of dishonesty in herself, the shock would affect him painfully, with consequences, perhaps, which she had no means of preventing.

Here in the Glen no whisper of it could reach him. Mrs.

Fontaine was unaware of it, and her crisp letters, breathing goodness of heart, energy of charity, and shrewd criticism of the world, always gave them just that word of the continued well-being of their old friends at Bleachgreens which their affectionate feeling desired, even while under a cloud. Added to these sources of satisfaction was the report of his own progress, which Arno did not fail to send them at intervals; and altogether Sara felt that life was good, the future full of that promise, beautiful if vague, so entrancing to youth, so inexplicable in its power to give joy, so sweet to look back upon through years still shining with mysterious glamour in the eyes of disillusioned maturity.

Autumn was verging towards winter when the Colonel caught cold sitting too late in the evening among the mists by the waterfall. An excellent doctor was within call, and Sara and Kitty Canavan were nurses of the best. But medical advice forbade the moving of the patient from his present quarters at a critical time of year, and after some deliberation the Colonel consented to take care of his health and to spend the winter in his sheltered nook among the hills.

The only drawback to this manner of wintering was the further delay of steps to be taken for the patenting of the great invention, a matter which must remain still in abeyance until better health and the return of genial weather should enable the inventor to proceed to London for the realization of his long-cherished dream of ameliorating some painful conditions of life for his laborious fellow-creatures.

His unexpected illness had given the Colonel a shock, and he regretted his former procrastination.

“This ought to teach me a lesson,” he said to Sara, “and I hope I am not too old to learn. If I had died of this attack, in all probability my efforts would have gone for nothing. Nobody would have cared to undertake the speculation, no one so clearly have understood——”

“Don’t talk about it, Daddy,” said Sara. “God intends you to work out this whole thing yourself. He does not want

you in heaven till you have finished all that He has appointed you to do in this world."

"That is your idea, is it? I confess it is sweet to think that one has got such a commission. It is a bracing, an invigorating thought."

"I can't think how people can live without such a faith. I am sure every one has some such commission to do, something for the Creator in His scheme of things, whether it be toiling in a poor family, nursing in a hospital, humbly serving the rich for a wage, digging the earth, teaching, sewing, cooking, spreading the reverence for truth and beauty through the arts."

"Well, little girl, your own commission is a pretty wide one, seeing how many doings you put your little hand to."

"Oh, me?" said Sara. "My commission would seem to be for the doing of a number of little things, none of which appear to be of much consequence. I could wish to do something great."

"I believe the little thing is sometimes the greatest," said the Colonel. "But I don't call nursing a father very little; nor writing a book."

"I tried to put some good thoughts into my story," said Sara, "and if I write more I shall sow noble ideas all the way along as I go, like flower-seeds in a garden, hoping to see my crop of flowers one day in heaven. Here, of course, it is impossible I can ever see them. I often think, however, while I write, of the hearts into which my words may sink, and picture to myself the faces of souls with whom I have been in touch."

Early in spring they returned to town, and the Colonel, restored in health, prepared for a visit to London, looking forward to it with great interest, for several reasons. There was first of all the grand object of the visit, the arrangements to be made for patenting the invention. Friendships were to be renewed on the part of the Colonel, and Sara was to be introduced to persons who would welcome her for her father's sake, and to whom he would be proud to present her.

They would revisit all the picture galleries and enjoy the best music. It was altogether a delightful time which they promised themselves.

The Colonel said little about the hopes he cherished with regard to his invention, the works of his late years, the companion and solace of hours that without it would have been tedious to the disabled man in his chair, even despite Sara's faithful presence and loving solicitude. But as he reviewed all its points, examining his plans and models again and again to see that nothing had been overlooked, that nothing could be amended or improved, he dwelt on the pleasure and pride he should feel when this fruit of his brain and creation of his hands should be placed before those who should know how to benefit by it. He smiled, thinking of the surprise of Sir Jonah, and the admiration of Robert Montgomery, to whom it was bound to prove so useful, and whom it would probably bring to his side, putting an end to a foolish interruption in their friendship. Mrs. Fontaine, too, who had so often railed at him for failing to exert himself for the benefit of his fellow-creatures, how delighted she would be, how generous would be her sympathy and her congratulations. And besides and beyond the applause of such old friends, there would be the appreciation of the public, the gratitude of the numbers whose conditions of life would be so greatly improved by the instrumentality of this ingenious thing which he, and he only, had brought into existence in the world.

As Sara perceived how deeply he was under the influence of these happy foreseings, how sunned by brilliant anticipations, she felt a return of a little fear lest, after all, some disappointment might lie in wait for him. She wished that he would confide in some person more experienced in such matters than himself. If even Harvey Durrant would come and give his judgment, such as it might be, on the matter! He had formerly counselled waiting for further development. She hinted to her father that it might be well to ask Harvey to come and give his opinion before final steps were taken.

But the Colonel did not see his way to any such proceeding.

"The truth is," he said, "I am not quite satisfied with Harvey. He has held me back, and now he has evidently ceased to take an interest in this matter. He is aware that we have returned to town, and he has not come to look us up."

"Perhaps he will come," said Sara.

But he did not appear. The Colonel returned to the subject again and again. He was disappointed in Durrant.

"Why not write and ask him to come?" suggested Sara.

"No," said the Colonel. "If he had not known that I had been ill I should not think so much of it, but I wrote from the Glen telling him of it, and he replied in a short note, which you saw. In it he expressed regret at hearing I had been unwell, but I did not feel the letter as warm as I had expected it to be. He did not speak at all of the invention, or deplore the delay in bringing it under notice of the world. You see I had been looking on him as a friend, the only one besides Arno who knew what I had been about all these years."

Sir Jonah came, and was kind in his own rude way.

"Has Durrant been to see you?" was one of his first questions.

"No," said the Colonel. "I begin to think he has forgotten us. One must expect friends to drop off, perhaps."

"I suspect he is sulking at your daughter. You don't suppose I was unaware of what occurred at Willows' Burn at Christmas?"

"He has not sulked. He came to see us after all that, and was as friendly as ever, evidently quite unhurt."

"He ought to have been hurt. It is a mark against him if he did not sulk."

"You are a good friend, but a good hater, Sir Jonah. You do not like this young man whom you have benefited."

"I'll tell you what I did, George Stevenson. I said to

myself and to him that if Sara accepted him I would give them my property at my death.”

“Then, it seems, Sara has injured him, unfortunately. She has not injured herself. I fear she has an unacknowledged prejudice against Harvey. She has never thought of him as highly as I have done.”

“A woman’s instinct is nearly always right. I find her right more than ever now. If Harvey was not miserable at losing her he deserves to be miserable at losing the property.”

“But you will not cast him off, Sir Jonah? You must not let Sara be the cause of such a misfortune to him.”

“What was never on, cannot be cast off. As Sara’s husband he would have been something to me, without her he is nothing. Sara has proved to me that there is nothing in him.”

“He is very companionable, very attractive,” said the Colonel reflectingly. “When he is with you he seems to be as thoroughly sincere as he is charming. It is after he has left you that sometimes, only sometimes, a faint impression of the reverse arises in your mind, a passing look on the face, a tone of the voice comes back with a disagreeable meaning which you repel. But why am I making so disloyal a suggestion? Ought I to speak of him with bitterness because he has forgotten to visit me?”

“Speak of him as you find him,” said Sir Jonah. “He doesn’t forget. Harvey’s memory is good enough for anything he thinks is to his advantage.”

“Well, I suppose there is not much to be gained by anyone in spending hours with a man chained to a chair,” said the Colonel with a little laugh.

Sir Jonah smiled grimly.

“Seize a good thing when it is thrown to you,” he said. “Let him lie where he has fallen. Don’t stoop to pick him up.”

“You are a terrible misanthrope,” said the Colonel.

“Ay, ay!” said Sir Jonah. “So they say. Sometimes it

is convenient. Under the shelter of a bad name you can be as good as you like without being suspected."

"Is that right? 'Let your light shine before men' is the command."

"Mine will never be missed. Why, man, the world is one blaze of shining lights. Harvey's lamp is illumining all Bleachgreens at the present moment."

"They are very fond of him," said Sara, trying to put in a good word for the man who had been hurt by her.

"*You* are not fond of him," said Sir Jonah.

Chapter XXXV

“Another has been beforehand with me”

AT last the date was fixed for the important visit to London with the object of patenting the great invention. The Colonel was in high spirits as he packed up his model and his drawings. August and the warm weather were upon them by the time they got across the Channel, the month usually spent at the seaside, and London seemed even more hot and dusty to Sara and her father than to most of those left behind after the fashionable people and the holiday trippers had departed. Foreigners were coming and going in the Langham Hotel, a good centre from which to pay frequent visits to the shops and the picture galleries. An experienced man was engaged to wheel the Colonel about in his chair whithersoever he would go. He expected to spend long hours in conference with those authorities on mechanical matters who should undertake to engineer the great work and prepare it for practical application to the purposes for which it was designed. In his absence Sara was to give Kitty lessons in Art in the National Gallery, and Mrs. Canavan's eyes were to be dazzled in the course of many a morning's shopping. What people could want with so many things to wear was a puzzle to Kitty.

“It's a sin for them,” she would say, “and so many creatures bare and hungry. How are they going to meet judgment at all, at all?”

“But you know, Kitty, some people have money enough for everything, both giving and spending. And the people

who keep the shops have to live, too, and the making of these things means wages for the poor."

"Oh, then, don't I know that small are the wages? And didn't I see a string of beads in a shop and it marked, the price of it, a thousand pounds! Do you mean to tell me, Miss Sara, you that has the heart, that it's right for any lady to walk about with a thousand pounds hangin' round her neck, never thinkin' of them that are cold and hungry?"

"I confess I wouldn't like to do it, Kitty, but perhaps if you and I had great riches we might be tempted to do many a foolish thing. Those 'beads' you saw were diamonds, and it isn't so very many of them you would get for a thousand pounds."

"Then, I'd let them hang there!" said Kitty indignantly. "God forgive them that puts them in the way of fools!"

"Now, Kitty Canavan, I thought you would be delighted at the sight of such handsome shops."

"They're a fine sight, I don't deny; it's only the foolishness that's in them I object to. Our own shops at home are good enough. Many's the nice thing you bought in them, Miss Sara."

In the picture galleries she was quite as critical.

"Some of the pictures are beautiful," she said. "Lovely and holy like some we saw in—in—that town with the woman's name."

"Florence?"

"Ay. But some more of them I wouldn't be lookin' at. And I don't think it's quite a respectable place for the like of us to be walkin' through, Miss Sara."

This was at the first visit; afterwards Kitty enjoyed herself in all the objectionable places, and went so far against her principles as to covet a good many of the pretty things in the windows for the adornment of her young mistress.

"Now, Kitty, you unreasonable woman, where is your conscience?" Sara would cry.

"It's crazied out of me, I think, Miss Sara. You oughtn't to have brought me to London to lose my soul on me,"

It was a memorable day of excitement when the Colonel set out to take the first steps in the weighty matter of the patenting of his invention, and Sara saw him leave the hotel in high spirits without any of the uneasiness she had sometimes felt with regard to the realization of his hopes and anticipations.

After some hours he returned, and she flew to meet him with her usual eager sympathy. At the first glance she saw that he looked pale and ill. The attendant wheeled him to his favourite place near the window and retired. Kitty fussed about arranging things in the room, and Sara said nothing until she too had departed, leaving her alone with her father.

"Daddy, is anything the matter with you? You look tired. It will soon be luncheon time. You must need something."

"Take your lunch, dear. I have no appetite. I will rest here quietly. I feel the heat."

"If you have no appetite, neither have I. Daddy, are you feeling unwell?"

She tried not to show all the anxiety she felt.

"A little tired, darling. That is really all."

"I will wait till you are rested, then, before I ask you to tell me about your morning's work."

"There is very little to tell, dear. I have got a great fall. I have been living in a fool's paradise, it seems."

"Daddy! Do you mean to say they do not appreciate the invention? Don't heed them. They must be stupid and silly; but they are not the only people in the world. Laugh at them, Daddy, and have your lunch. You know the value of your work, and so will the right persons when you have found them."

"It is not that, Sara. The invention is right enough and fully valued, but——"

"But what?"

"It is not original, it seems. Another has been beforehand with me. The thing has been invented by another brain, and quite recently. And it is already patented."

Sara sat in consternation.

"It is too much of a coincidence," she cried.

"So I said when informed of my defeat. But I was only smiled at, and told that such coincidences often happen. Even stars and planets have been discovered at the same hour by different persons in different parts of the world. Le Verrier and Adams both discovered Uranus on the same night."

"There must be a mistake. It is incredible, or at least too improbable. Who is the inventor?"

"It is patented by a firm known as Johnston and Johnston. It does not matter to me who is the inventor, since I am not the patentee. I confess it is a blow. I must try to bear it."

"There is a mistake somewhere," reiterated Sara. "Surely you will see further before making up your mind to bear it. Where are Johnston and Johnston to be found?"

"I have got the address of their office. I confess I do not see much use in going to interview them—only to see them smile pityingly at my belated production."

"But you will go?" persisted Sara. "We must see this to the end, Daddy."

"Yes. Certainly I will leave nothing undone to satisfy you, child. For myself I am thoroughly convinced already. That man knew perfectly what he was talking about."

On this occasion Sara accompanied her father, "wishing to hear everything with her own ears," as she said.

Johnston and Johnston were quite clear and decisive in their account of the work they had undertaken to engineer and exploit. It had been patented a year ago, and received by manufacturers as a valuable discovery, a great boon to both employed and employers. The owners of the patent were likely to make a fortune. The actual inventor did not wish his name to be known. He had sold the thing to the patentees. It was now about a year since arrangements had been made with the engineers, and orders were pouring in for the supply of the new machinery.

Further particulars were gone into. Every detail of the

Colonel's invention was compared with that developed by Johnston and Johnston. The model of the machinery was seen to be an exact duplicate of the Colonel's model. Nothing further was to be done except to hear the agents' repeated comments on the peculiarity of the coincidence, to accept defeat, and to withdraw.

"I felt that the fellow suspected me all the time of being either mentally astray or an impostor. At all events, you are satisfied now that your father's genius has produced an anachronism, Sara!"

"Only a year too late," said Sara. "It seems too strange to be true."

"The strange things are the truest. The strangest of all is to reflect that had I not been so secret, and had hurried my operations a little, I might have been first in the field. It is a judgment on procrastination. I may now burn my models and my papers."

"No, no," said Sara. "You must keep them carefully. There may yet be some explanation of the coincidence."

It was the first time that she had ever seen him utterly dispirited. The disappointment, so entirely unforeseen, affected him painfully, his nerves were jarred and weakened, and the result was a return of the illness from which he had suffered some months before. A London physician, having pulled him through the attack, advised a complete change of scene and thought. The patient had had too much brain-worry for a man obliged to lead a sedentary life. A return to his habits of the last few years was not to be thought of. The Colonel forbade Sara to tell the story of his ambition and its overthrow even to the doctor, but she did not scruple to make known the nature of the studies which for some years past had been occupying him.

"Nothing could be worse for him in his present state of health," said the doctor. "A man afflicted as he is very often takes up a fad of the kind, and goes too far with it. Get him away out of sight, sound, and hearing of everything connected

with such ideas. A year or two in some interesting foreign place would be beneficial to him."

The Colonel made no objection to this suggestion.

"I will go where you please," he said. "I should shrink from a return to the old home and the laboratory at present. I must get accustomed to my disappointment, and be able to laugh at the fiasco before I can make myself happy there again. Where then shall we go, little daughter? What do you think of another visit to the Casentino and the *padre*?"

"Delightful!" said Sara.

"And we can see our friend Arno in Florence. How astonished he will be at the result of all our clever ingenuity!"

"Truly he will be amazed."

"How glad I am that I did not talk about my invention to Robert Montgomery, nor to Sir Jonah. If I had done so I should feel even more crestfallen now. There is only Harvey Durrant, and he has evidently forgotten all about us. When he comes to hear of this new patented machinery he will think, if he thinks of me at all, that I had drawn my ideas from some such outward source, and smile at my dream of originality."

"Harvey!" echoed Sara, and fell into a musing mood. She could not think of him as so very forgetful. And somehow the mention of him at this moment disturbed her unexpectedly. Arno and Harvey were the only two persons who had been admitted to her father's counsels during the progress of his work. She did not see exactly what bearing this fact could have on the present misfortune, but it remained in the back of her mind, making a vague claim for significance.

The thought of being in Italy again was enchanting, and, seeing her joy, the Colonel's thoughts were diverted from his own vexations to a new interest. Sara began to dream of a book of Italian folk-lore to be illustrated by her own pencil, subject to the criticism of Arno. The purchase of note-books and sketching materials was superintended by her father, and a new atmosphere already began to surround the travellers.

Chapter XXXVI

“ It has set your Genius free ”

DESPITE his unselfish interest in his daughter's pleasure, the Colonel continued to suffer from attacks of depression at moments when a realization of the utter uselessness of his labours and the efforts of his brain, and of the waste of time which might have been better employed, came vividly before him.

Then Sara would cry : “ But, Daddy, that was only a beginning. When you are stronger you will try again. You have the power. And meanwhile, you can look round and assure yourself of what is already done, or being done. You will not keep your doings a secret. If anyone else has nearly completed the thing that you want to do, you can leave it to him and go on to something else.”

The Colonel would laugh and say :

“ You talk as if I had already passed the toll-gate of Time and had got a free foot and an unlimited fee-simple of life in Eternity, where there are neither beginnings nor endings. But I don't think I shall try again, dear.”

Sara shut her intelligent and very seeing eyes to the fact that this sense of accepted failure was a weakness in the character of a brave man. To be defeated and despoiled of his limbs by a cannon was nothing to fret about. Spoliation, even by coincidence, of the fruit of his brains was a more difficult foe to courage. But she did shut her eyes. What is the good of eyes to the spirit of love if it will make use of them for

seeing, in the beloved, faults which are only the shadow of their virtues ?

A letter of joyful welcome from Arno assured them of his pleasure in choosing apartments for them at no great distance from his own attic studio.

There was some little astonishment and confusion at the railway station when Arno was expected to meet his friends.

"I do not see him," said Sara. "That tall young man looks like him, but it could never——"

"That is the boy grown into a man," said the Colonel. Arno was meanwhile looking beyond the beautiful, stylish young lady in her elegant travelling dress, straining for a glimpse of an unfinished girl with long plaited hair and ankles visible under a schoolroom-cut frock. It was the Colonel whom he thoroughly recognised. An extraordinary shyness seized him as he made his way to the group where Kitty Canavan was excitedly counting out her rugs and parcels to a porter.

"Can this be Arno?" said Sara, coming a step to meet him.

"It is I, Miss Stevenson."

Sara felt as if a veil had dropped between them. Being now grown up, were they to meet on different footing? There was no time for reflection. It was all a question of luggage and conventional enquiries, and reports as to their travelling, the Colonel's health, and the well-being of the *padre*.

"I wonder if it was really Arno who met us at the station?" was Sara's last thought before falling asleep that night. "How sad it is to be quite grown up! Shall we always meet as strangers after this? And, if so, what will become of all the pleasure and happy intercourse I have been looking forward to?"

Arno found them finishing breakfast the next morning, and Sara, in her fresh white dress and simple hat, was so much herself as of old that his shyness began to leave him, while, after a few eager words about his art, the girl was no longer afraid of having to begin new acquaintance with him as a

stranger. Nothing was said about the fate of the invention. Conversation turned on Art. Arno had a delightful piece of news to communicate. The portrait of the *padre* had proved a great success. A rich American had purchased it, and intended to let it be seen by the public in London. Arno was now at work on another portrait.

“Such,” he said, “are my models for future work. I will paint no vulgar likenesses. A noble head, a countenance of grand character, or of simple and pathetic feeling, is a study for some picture yet to be conceived.”

Late in the afternoon the *padre* appeared, having come with an eager invitation to the whole party to sojourn for a time in his little house in the Casentino.

“It is too warm in Florence at present,” he said. “Come to my little vineyard and cornfield. I will give you grapes and olives. You know my little brown rooms. I have one for each of you. It will be time enough to settle down here when the winter is beginning.”

The old man was looking older, but, observing his face with Arno’s ideal portrait in mind, they found in it such depth of strength, so much refreshing sweetness irradiating rugged features with spiritual lights, that they realized without difficulty the charm which had made Arno’s portrait a success. The invitation was gladly accepted, and after a few days of rest and some visits to the galleries in the cool afternoons, Sara and her father and Kitty accompanied the *padre* to the Casentino, Arno remaining behind to finish some work, but looking forward to the moment when he should be free to follow.

Sara took possession once more of the little room which had been hers during her first visit to the Casentino, and set up her desk and sketch books beside the little window with its outer drapery of vine-wreaths, its sun-gilt sashes, and brilliant flowers standing tiptoe to look at her over the sill. Away down in the blue distance the olive trees made dark streaks on the glamour of light, and the misty outlines of luminous hills suggested La Verna. On the silhouette of a distant rock a dark shape

appeared which seemed to Sara like the bowed figure of Saint Francis at prayer.

"It is only a tree stump," said the *padre*, laughing, "but I believe our dear saint is not far away, and that he watches over us."

Not until Arno came was anything said about the defeated hopes of the Colonel and the belatedness of the invention. Sara spoke first, wishing to spare her father the pain of explanation.

"Before you begin to talk intimately to my father," she said to Arno, "I have something to tell you. You must not question him about the success of the cherished invention."

"Why? It cannot be that it is pronounced useless!"

"No. But another has been before him in designing and patenting. It seems the world of thought is 'so small' as well as the world of material measurement."

"I can hardly believe it. They would have known of it at Bleachgreens. Robert Montgomery is just the man to make use of such a thing at the very first word of it."

"The patentee has only been a year in advance of father. We have had very little intercourse with the Montgomeries during the last two years."

"Not since——?"

"Since the day when either you or I stole the bag of sovereigns."

"Sara!"

Sara laughed.

"We shouldn't have suspected each other, should we?" she said.

"I am still under the cloud," said Arno, "though it has ceased to darken my life. This Italian sunshine, this joy in Art can penetrate any darkness, except the shadow of evil. With a good conscience one can eat and work and sing here untroubled."

"Did you know that Robert did me the honour of including me in the suspicion attaching to the mystery?"

Arno's pale cheek coloured. “I can't speak of it without shame,” he said. “Mark mentioned it to me in a letter.”

“I don't see why I should not bear the wrong as well as you.”

“What could you have wanted to do with the money?”

“Oh, buy jewellery, I suppose. Robert thought I might have exceeded my allowance and coveted a string of pearls or some such gew-gaw. He is not a good reader of character. I have some dear old gems of my mother's, as he ought to know, and he had never seen me wear them. As it was, I had some money of my own which I did not need, but that, of course, he did not imagine. Even father was not aware of it.”

“You offered it to me, Sara. May I ask you now, when it is all so long ago, where did you get it?”

“I got it part from a publisher, wonderful to relate, for a little book I wrote, and the rest for small stories in magazines. I was horribly afraid of being pointed to as an authoress among my friends. I did not even tell father until last summer when my book fell into his hands.”

“And you wanted to give it to me!”

“I was troubled about you. And it is still a wonder to me where you got money to travel and make a new beginning in life.”

“Did I not tell you of the sale of the picture I painted that summer in the Glen?”

“No. You never told us of its fate.”

Arno looked puzzled, but after a little reflection he said :

“I know how it must have been. The news of the sale and the arrival of the payment occurred just at the moment of my leaving Bleachgreens. I believed that I told you, but my mind was in such a state of confusion that I must have forgotten it.”

“Well, now, we are cleared in each other's eyes at any rate, whatever some stupid people may have thought of us.

But you will bear in mind that father is now, and must always remain, in ignorance of the honour done his daughter by his friend."

"You say we are cleared in each other's eyes. You did not doubt me surely, Sara?"

"Just about as much as you doubted me," said Sara, laughing. "We have been fellow-sufferers, and yet I can't say that we have suffered much."

"At first the thing was intolerable," said Arno. "The misery and shame seemed more than I could bear. But it was not a real evil, and so it melted away. And now I feel that I have distinctly gained by the misfortune——"

"It has set your genius free," said Sara with enthusiasm.

"Thank you for those sweet words," said Arno fervently. "You are my good angel, the star of hope that has led me on——"

"Those are also sweet words," said Sara. "When you are a great artist, a world-famous painter, I shall be proud to remember them."

Here the *padre* came to tell them that the Colonel had just been confiding to him the tale of the strange coincidence and his own deep disappointment.

"It is a curious happening, a heavy blow to him," said the *padre*, "but he is bearing it well. He is brave, through and through. He will be at something again before long. What can we suggest to him?"

"Think about it, *padre*!" said Sara.

"Something that will keep him in Italy," said Arno.

"I should say he might design a new Cathedral," said the *padre*, "only we have already so many——"

"You must discover something that is urgently needed," said Sara. "Father will not play with a useless thing."

"His heart is among the whizzing belts and the cog-wheels of the factories," said Arno. "He is no dreamy Italian. To relieve his fellow-creatures from the hard grind of the kind of labour he understands is his ambition. Merely to exercise

his ingenuity and employ his hands is not enough for him. He must feel that he is pressing towards a noble goal.”

“ Well spoken, my son,” said the *padre*. “ So must we all feel who have true hearts and clear-seeing brains, if we would be happy. Religion, art, science, all God’s gifts cry to us to make use of time while we have it, for the furthering of His plans, and as His instruments of good to His creatures.”

Chapter XXXVII

One in Three

ARNO soon confided to Sara his desire to paint a picture of Abraham receiving the three Angels at the door of his tent. He besought her to be his model for the angels.

"But how?" said Sara. "I am not three—only one. And, besides, those angels were masculine beings."

"It is not proved that angels have any sex. We are only told that Abraham took his visitors for three young men. You have strength enough in your character to allow of force being added to your features, and your grace will soften the outlines of figures which otherwise shall have a masculine air."

"Even if that expectation were realized, would not the three have an air of conventionality from a certain family likeness?"

"No, because, as I said before, you have variety of character enough in your one self to divide among three."

"Oh, well," said Sara, laughing, "I will say no more. It is evident that there will be no danger of Sara Stevenson being detected masquerading as Abraham's angels, seeing that she will be split up into parts none of which will be recognizable as belonging to her. The idea of having even a share in the individuality of an angel is delightful. I have sometimes tried to draw one myself, but some more urgent duty always came and drove away the fascinating image that floated about me, before I had captured it."

"Don't you remember in Browning's 'One Word More' the lines :"

"Dante once prepared to paint an angel :
Whom to please? You whisper, 'Beatrice.'
While he mused and traced it, and retraced it.

Dante, who loved well because he hated,
Hated wickedness that hinders loving.
Dante standing, studying his angel—
In there broke the folk of his Inferno.

Says the poet, 'Then I stopped my painting.'

You and I would rather see that angel
Painted by the tenderness of Dante,
Would we not?—than read a fresh Inferno."

"I remember your reading that to us one evening at home. Perhaps it was those lines that suggested to me the desire to try to make an angel of my own."

"I would like to see that angel of yours."

"But I hope you do not think the alternative work that denied existence to it was anything very terrible——"

"No, for I am well aware that the work you are always at is angels' work, the care of your father. A photograph would have shown your angel, living and breathing, at any moment."

"Now, Arno, don't begin to flatter, or all the angels will disappear, the three of them, and your Abraham will be left alone, rubbing his disappointed eyes at the door of his tent. The caring for a dear father is very human work," she added wistfully, "and requires no particular aid from the angels."

A patriarchal old man was found as a model for Abraham, and the picture was begun. As it progressed, Arno proved his power to produce three distinct individualities out of Sara's single presence. Of the three in the group of Abraham's visitors, one was majestic, lofty intellect and high courage on his brows and in his bearing; another glowed with eager intelligence, illumined with the fervour of love; and the third, the most youthful, had a sweet and tender countenance, as if

fitted to be the guardian of little children and of the suffering poor.

Arno set up his easel in a beautiful spot in the open air, and Sara stood in the golden light of the afternoon with the lovely landscape behind her, till the luminous atmosphere gradually became tempered and softened by the purple shadows of twilight. It was in the evening hour that Abraham beheld the angels approaching his tent. At other times Sara sat while Arno worked upon his angels' faces, and painter and model held many a conversation, which ended in drawing their minds and hearts more closely together.

"Speak of angels and they appear," said Sara. "I am thinking now of the angel painted by young Leonardo into the picture of his master, Andrea Verrocchio, of San Giovanni baptizing Christ. Vasari says that the angel of Leonardo was much better than the portion executed by his master, which caused the latter never to touch colours more, so much was he displeased to find that a mere child could do more than himself."

"Yes," said Arno, "that picture is now in our Florence, in the Academy of Fine Arts. What Schorn says is true. 'The figures of Andrea are without doubt hard and dry, while the angel of Leonardo is full of life and expression.'"

"The very name of Verrocchio gives me a thrill of pleasure from association with some of the happiest hours of my childhood," said Sara. "I wonder what has become of the old book called *Villa Verrocchio, the Childhood of Leonardo da Vinci*. The boy Leonardo was one of my beloved companion-spirits at that time. I wonder where was the Villa Verrocchio? I know that Vinci is in the Valdarno, near the Lake Fucecchio. Do you remember the story of the lion made of butter?"

"Yes, the table centre-ornament for a banquet failed, the cook in the kitchen was in despair, the little boy Leonardo called for a large lump of butter and carved a lion, so life-like that the guests at the table, some of whom were artists, cried out in admiration when they beheld it."

"As well as I can remember, this was the incident that decided the boy's destiny. He was a wild little fellow, running in and out of the kitchen of the Villa Verrocchio, the house of his father's friend, Andrea the painter. His kindly anxiety to assist the cook out of a difficulty discovered his genius. That little boy and his splendid performance bewitched me. How angry poor Kitty was one morning when she found me trying to carve an animal out of the butter for my breakfast! 'Sure, Miss Sara,' she said, 'I never did see such an animal, nor nobody else! It must be one of them that was here before the Flood. And to think of wastin' the good Christian butter that Providence put before you on such a crature!'"

"I hope you told her that she was lucky to be able to eat the monster, instead of being eaten by him."

"I know she punished me by telling me that my beautiful piece of sculpture was to be melted by the cook for sauce. There were other things in that book which I do not find in Vasari. It was related how Leonardo as a youth studied from the most repulsive models, seeking out every hideous misshapen object as subject for his pencil; and that by this strange way he arrived at the highest conception of perfection of beauty."

"It is certain that he produced the Medusa," said Arno.

"Books about the childhood of great artists are not now provided for children," said Sara. "A reproduction of their own little common doings is considered more attractive. Hero worship on the highest lines is left out of their training. I bless God for the books of my early reading. Without them my childhood would have been too lonely, and my mind would now be more barren and empty."

"They opened a way for your thoughts to travel by, a little upward path leading imperceptibly to the heights. I, too, am glad now that I escaped the conventional training. My ideal hero is not the champion of the golf club, nor is my ideal warrior the most skilled among manufacturers of explosives.

The sword and the pen remain to me mightier than dynamite and the golf stick, valour and the genius of art more worthy of reverence than sport and the wholesale destruction of mankind."

Sara laughed. "We should be written down as very old-fashioned young people," she said, "if the critical powers that rule public opinion could hear our conversation."

"Let them write us down. We may live to find that we were in advance of our time, as well as behind our age. The world is bound to right itself by and by. I believe the wave of luxury and unfaith is nearly spent. It began to rise fifty years ago, long before you and I were born, but as we lived in a sheltered creek we felt nothing of it. We are on the high seas now, but we are riding the wave. I fancy that even now I can see the crest of a nobler wave on the horizon."

"All ideals were not of the noblest long ago," said Sara. "Father's were, but think of Sir Jonah and Robert Montgomery. Their ideal appears to be moneyed success."

"I know little of Sir Jonah," said Arno, "he is beyond my ken in his views and way of life, but I credit Montgomery with a better god than Mammon. He has truly at heart the advancement of trade, not alone as a source of gain for himself, but for the sake of the uses to humanity of manufacture and commerce if pursued with integrity. It was the inferred deviation from that integrity in us that made him hard to me and insulting to you. He did not make us suffer without suffering also himself. I felt this vaguely at the time, but since I have been in a purer atmosphere I have seen it more clearly, and recognized it more satisfactorily. Robert loves the growth of flax for the sake of linen, and linen because it is a clean necessary for human beings. He loves the turning of his wheels for giving employment to otherwise hungry men and women. Mark and Hugh have something of his spirit, and may develop more, but they are washed by the wave of too much luxury and amusement. They are splendid golfers, but

they will always want too much money for their ideal of living, and they will never be as good men of business or as disinterested employers as Robert himself. Mark is the better of the two, but he will hardly rise to the complete dimensions of his father."

"How you have thought it all out!" said Sara. "Little they imagined that you were weighing and judging them so keenly."

"I did it unawares. I always felt that the ideal of my poor father, who was condemned among them as a foolish dreamer and unpractical, was the high one, and that his failure was due to lack of money, and, above all, to physical weakness. He was on the right lines, but he fell on them. In his own way he fulfilled the designs of Providence. This has comforted me, while I feel that I have his spirit in me, also condemned by the 'practical' ones, and that God has for some purpose added to me bodily and mental strength to pursue the ideal where others have failed, to trudge the hard road by the side of which many have fallen."

There was silence between artist and model, their minds busy with long thoughts not easy to bring to conclusion. Each thread was at last finished temporarily with a loose knot to hinder backward ravelling, but ready for future freeing and continuing. The violet shades on the horizon were growing too deep for the picture, and the study for the day came to an end.

Later, they had their evening stroll, the *padre* walking by the Colonel's chair, and contributing out of a much-ransacked memory yet one or two more legends or tales of the least-known nooks of the Casentino, as treasure for the collection of folk-lore which it was Sara's present delight to gather, the material of a future book to be illustrated by Arno.

This was a happy hour for all four, under the dark-blue night sky of Italy, the great stars watching, as if wider awake than in more earthy and foggy regions, and the vague outlines and faint gleams of a world of genius and fruitful dreams

appealing to their human eyes and their immortal souls from an ethereal distance.

“What an hour of peace!” said Arno. “Even the big wheels at Bleachgreens have stopped floundering in the mill-race and are resting now. It will soon be the hour when I used to steal from the yard and go sketching in the dawn in the folds of the high fields.”

Chapter XXXVIII

“Let us not be too hasty !”

“ONE hardly expects letters to find one in the Casentino,” said Sara, as the post came in. “Yet here is a lapful for father and myself.”

“And even one for me,” said Arno. “A letter from Mark Montgomery.”

“I am glad,” said Sara, “and father will be glad. We are often wanting to hear something from Bleachgreens.”

Arno was reading his letter.

“Hullo !” he said, “here is news indeed. Durrant and Herminia are engaged to be married.”

“Good !” said Sara ; “I am not surprised. I think they will suit each other perfectly.”

“There seems to have been trouble about it at first, however,” said Arno, glancing over the closely-written sheets. “And something fortunate has turned up to put things straight I will read the letter aloud right through, if it does not bore you, Colonel.”

“On the contrary,” said the Colonel, “anything concerning my old friends must be interesting to me.”

“I don’t know whether or not you will be surprised to hear,” wrote Mark, “that Herminia is going to be married to Harvey Durrant. It is an old affair between themselves, and as Harvey was believed to be Sir Jonah’s heir the money was supposed to be all right, and no objection could be made to the marriage. To father’s great surprise, however, the crusty

old gentleman stoutly refused to realize any such expectations. Father would have admitted him as partner in the business if Sir Jonah had been generous, but Harvey without a penny was not thought to be valuable enough as an acquisition to the firm, never having distinguished himself in any way in the matters of talent and energy. As we all liked him—you know what a favourite he is—we were sorry for him, though Herminia, I must say, took it as coolly as anybody.

“Wonders will never cease, and among the marvels are the blunders made in judging of people’s powers. Harvey was put on his mettle to do something to win Herminia, and he went to work to develop and finish up a plan he had invented to improve the machinery of the mills. In an astonishingly short time he brought it to perfection, and patented it in London before he told father a word about it.”

Arno here stopped short in the reading, and there was a silence of some moments.

“Go on, Arno,” said the Colonel.

Sara glanced at her father, and then met Arno’s eyes as he took up the letter again.

“It is interesting,” said the *padre*. “He is clever, then, this Harvey.”

“So it would appear,” said Arno.

“It is a perfectly delightful invention for simplifying and expediting labour, and will prove a boon to both employers and employed. You can imagine how it has exalted Harvey in father’s esteem, independently of the fact that it is making money, and is bound to get any amount of it. Already it is in demand everywhere. We have got it into the mills, and it is working admirably.

“The result is that father has accepted Harvey as a husband for Herminia, and Herminia and my mother are delighted. Harvey is pleasanter than ever in his good fortune, and is very modest over his brilliant performance. We are altogether a happy family at present, and I only wish we had some old friends back again here among us.”

The letter then drifted into less personal matters, but nobody seemed to listen to it beyond a certain point. Arno finished the reading mechanically and folded the letter, and replaced it in its envelope slowly, before anybody spoke. Sara was the first to break silence.

“Father, has not Harvey Durrant stolen your invention?”

“Hush, dear! Let us not be too hasty. This may be something entirely different from mine.”

“He was with you often in the Laboratory. He studied all the points with you. He held you back when you would have pushed forward with the patenting.”

“It is true, Sara, but you are making him a scoundrel—treacherous and thieving. It is too serious a charge without due consideration. We know nothing of what Harvey has done beyond the fact that he has patented an invention.”

“He was the only person you confided in except Arno,” persisted Sara. “I never believed in the coincidence of the double invention. But I did not think Harvey could be capable——”

“Do not think evil of him now, until you have sufficient evidence,” said the Colonel; but Sara saw in his face that his thought was like her own.

“We shall soon ascertain,” said Arno. “I will write to Mark for a full and detailed description of the invention which has gained so much for Harvey. Mark has no objection to the writing of a long letter, and he will be pleased at my interest in a matter concerning the mills.”

“I can’t believe it,” said the Colonel. “It is something different. His sympathy with my work may have led him to try to do something himself. A man would not come into my place, accept my confidence, and give me advice with a view to preparing the way for himself to rob me.”

“A good man would not.”

“Sara, I will not make up my mind till the thing is proved. If I once come to believe it my anger will be a thing to be feared. Don’t rouse me too soon.”

"It will not be greater than the thief would deserve," said Arno. "I believe Sara is right, but I agree with the Colonel that it is too serious a matter for jumping at conclusions. Let us wait and think it over, and to-morrow I will write. There will also be comparison of dates to be looked to."

When the *padre* came to an understanding of the question he agreed that the suspicion was too shocking to be harboured without further evidence; and no more was said on the subject that day, while the Colonel fell into a fit of deep abstraction, reviewing the times and the occasions of Harvey's association with the cherished work which had disappointed him.

The next morning brought a second letter from home as interesting, if not so startling as Mark's to Arno. This second letter was from Mrs. Fontaine to Sara, and was chiefly concerned with the same subject.

"You may not have heard," she wrote, "that your old admirer Harvey is to be married to Herminia. This is not so wonderful, all things considered, as the cause of the prosperity which promises to fall to the lot of the young people. Harvey has actually invented some clever piece of machinery which is already in demand in the mills here and elsewhere, and is likely to make his fortune. I confess I did not give him credit either for the cleverness or the sympathetic feeling for the labourer as well as the employer which must be in him, and which has resulted in something so advantageous to himself and so beneficial to humanity. Perhaps I have been too much prejudiced against him. I am a hot-headed old woman, and take strong likes and strong dislikes. I have hitherto always had a great belief in my own instinct, not to say my perspicacity, in judging character, and this is a lesson for me, perhaps, to rebuke my vanity. All the same, my dear, I am glad it is not you who are marrying Harvey. Herminia will suit him very well, and together they will make the money fly. Herminia is preparing a wonderful trousseau. Jane Montgomery entertains me occasionally with a description of the

dresses and of the presents, which, as the newspaper paragraphs say, are ‘numerous and costly.’ The girl herself looks very handsome and triumphant. I think she had always a liking for Harvey, and I hope she will not be unhappy if my estimate of him should prove more true in domestic than in more general relations.

“Robert’s pride in his son-in-law is amusing to see. Nothing could have so completely won him as this successful stroke of genius for the benefit of trade, not even Sir Jonah’s favour, which has been so oddly denied all through. I believe that some time ago Robert refused to listen to Harvey’s suit, and forbade the engagement on account of Sir Jonah’s coldness in the matter ; but with the new invention everything is changed. Even Sir Jonah is struck by it. That Harvey should, after all, have his heart so much in the progress and improvement of trade seems to affect him profoundly, as (so he confesses to me) until this development occurred he had been looking on him as a good-for-nothing. I should not wonder if after all it ended in Sir Jonah’s making Harvey his heir, which formerly he sturdily refused to do.

“Your father will be interested in all this. Of late years he seemed to have rather a taste for mechanics himself, and I am sure he will be as surprised as myself at Harvey’s unexpected achievement. You will probably hear more particularly the nature and working of the thing from Bleachgreens, as I believe Mark and Arno keep up a correspondence. I am not learned enough to give you the details.

“I must now tell you something of my school and my club girls——”

And the remainder of the letter was devoted to the old lady’s own particular works for the good of the humanity that labours in factories.

“This assures us of nothing further,” said the Colonel in answer to Sara’s speaking looks.

“It suggests a motive,” said Sara.

“What would you have me to do?”

"Make further enquiries into the matter. You know that Johnson and Johnson are the patentees, ostensibly, but the inventor chose to reserve his own name behind theirs. Let us go back to London, father, and not rest till we have discovered that name."

"It would be a proper thing to do," said the Colonel, "but I don't feel keen for it. We should probably gain nothing by it. That Harvey could have carried out this thing so quickly and secretly seems stranger to me than any coincidence. I hate going to war with old friends and making trouble for them. The marriage will have taken place before any accusation can be made against Harvey; and if he be the rascal you suppose him to be, how terrible the discovery to Robert and his family."

Next day the Colonel was unwell, and more and more inclined to silence and peace. The *padre*, being essentially a man of peace, sympathized with him. Arno and Sara conferred together. It was agreed that Arno should go to London and prosecute investigations, not desisting until he had ascertained the name of the author of the invention which was identical with that of the Colonel.

Hearing of this decision the Colonel made no objection to the undertaking, but he could not be persuaded that the result would bring any satisfaction.

"If he should have copied my drawings and models," he said, "and studied all the workings of the thing——"

"But you have your drawings and models," said Sara, "made before his!"

"What evidence have I that they were made before his—before the publicity of the thing? Yours and Arno's."

"Two discredited witnesses in the eyes of Bleachgreens," said Sara aside to Arno.

"Now, sir," said Arno, "I intend to fight this thing out for you. Some things come to my mind which I need not detail to you till we see further. I loved Harvey, and I believed in him despite difficulties that got in the way of my faith. I had

confidence in his good nature and fair intentions, though I did not always like his conduct. This matter throws an unexpected light on him. I must see, even for my own sake, whether it misrepresents him or reveals him truly.”

“ You will leave your picture ? ” said the Colonel.

“ The picture can wait,” said Arno. “ I will come back to it.”

That day Arno wrote his letter of enquiries to Mark, and the next morning he departed for London.

Chapter XXXIX

Arno sees London

ARRIVED in London, Arno lost no time in going about the Colonel's business, and was met at once by difficulties he had not counted upon. He was sent from one office to another, and everywhere received evasive answers to his enquiries. Having at last ascertained the name and address of the person who could give him the information he wanted, he found that this individual was absent from home, and that the date of his return was uncertain. Determined not to leave London with the object of his visit unsecured, he waited from day to day, only sleeping in his frugal lodging, and spending the hours in the picture galleries, taking new impressions or strengthening old ones of the art work of various schools.

Passing into the portrait gallery he came on new ground. Here he was not only among works of famous English painters but surrounded by great minds, pressed by the living thought of powerful intelligences, standing before a cloud of witnesses to the spiritual in the human race. Rows and groups of brothers in art, science, music, painting, were around him ; also the daring explorers by land and sea ; the administrators of the law, in their disfiguring head-gear, which seemed to weigh on them like their ponderous responsibility, and from under which their eyes gazed forth, stern with a sense of justice, or mild with an understanding of mercy ; deep thinkers, philosophers hungry for relief from their own theories, yet rejecting food, some of them looking on the world with the glare of

starved animals ; all these, here mustered together, dead men so keenly alive, affected him powerfully in the aggregate, as he stood spellbound in the tremendous presence of the inextinguishable human soul.

He was glad of his opportunity, and time flew past as he studied nature in these varied characters of men, laying stone on stone of that deep foundation of truth on which, only, Art can stand as interpreter of the meanings of God.

"I thank the Creator for this passion that has mastered me ever since I can remember," thought the young student, standing before those who were as his forefathers rather than his brethren in the worship of art. "Faith, science, commerce, even the processional events and the unexpressed sensations of mere existence, all look to Art to utter for them what were otherwise lost in the profound silence of primitive nature. My fathers, my brothers, let me join your glorious ranks. For you, for us, there is no death. I see you marching still, on, on, forward into the unrevealed regions of Futurity, those dreams in your eyes, that fire in your nostrils, warring against evil, holding high the standard of beauty in goodness as contrasted with the horror of spiritual deformity. I am one with you, knights of the pencil and the pen. Take my vow, and give me a keen sword and a shield splendid as the sun. For me no purple of Mammon. I will wear my chain-armour of poverty."

Arno never forgot those days alone in London, when he was cut off for a time from his work and his usual associations, and lived rapt in spirit among great souls in whose ever-moving train he was a follower.

"You are travelling the dawn in chariots of fire!" he said. "I am a humble foot-man, plodding along the earth-road where you plodded before me. But I will yet climb to you by the ladders of the Sun!"

One or two visitors to the gallery glanced at him in passing, and remarked to each other, "there is a moonstruck youth! What a fascination genius has for some young people. Usually

it is a pity, as it gives them useless dreams, and unfits them for the safe common-places of life."

Occasionally some wiser tongue answered, "No one was ever the worse for worshipping the ideal in youth, even if it leads him a will-o'-the-wisp dance for a little while."

But none of them knew that they had been observing one who was destined to take his place in a future day among the immortal geniuses of his country.

When not in the galleries, he was in the slums of the city, studying dire poverty, with its dark pursuing shadow of evil, and its lamp of patience held aloft, casting holy radiance into hideous places. So did Leonardo study the ethereal exquisiteness of light by contrast with the horror of hopeless gloom. His sketches made at this time are among the most striking and valued records of his earlier years of aspiration and effort. There is a little series of miniature pictures under the heading "Out of Work," telling a tale as vividly as any canvas of Hogarth's, and with a more refined and poignant pathos. It gives us the scene of destitution in the home, the death-bed of the "frozen-out" labourer, surrounded by the pinched faces of starved children, and ends with the poor funeral leaving the door of the squalid tenement. In the same portfolio is found a sharp drawing of a hungry mother with her infant on her breast, led to gaol by a policeman, for stealing food. On the back of this is scribbled, "Only a hundred years ago they hanged such." Another sketch presents a drunken man in all his repulsiveness—simply the one figure in a horrible alone-ness, a beast-like aloofness from natural humanity. Yet one more shows the open door of a public-house and a woman outside peering in with strained anxiety and anguish in all the lines of her figure, at the disorderly forms and faces dimly indicated in the shadows of the interior. Many more like these, jottings hastily made of scenes out of the tragedy of human life, remain to show the progress of the development of Arno's genius, which, awakening first to the worship of the beautiful, gradually

perceived the close connection of that with the sublimity of suffering, and spent itself in the ardent desire to draw the world into a better understanding of good and of evil, of misery and of happiness.

Yet another class of studies was made in the haunts of the prosperous and the fashionable. A hopeless face set on jewelled throat, and shoulders draped with costly stuffs, framed in the window of a brougham, looking out on a weary world ; the bloated visage and unwholesome figure of a man of pleasure, strutting down a promenade, with a bland smile masking the defiance of the laws of God and man writ intelligibly enough in the lines of his countenance. A group of gamblers with haggard jaws and weird eyes quarrelling over their cards in the half-revealing dawning light ; a girl on the parapet of a bridge at midnight, dark against the dreary gleam of a lamp, her arms flung over her head, about to end her despair by a leap into the river below ; a man and woman, wedded without love, glaring fiercely at each other across the hearth in the home that ought to have been a sanctuary of happiness. All these the keen eyes of the artist discerned and recorded as he took his solitary way through the great city. In the busy 'bus' he also made his observations and caught happier glimpses of life which he seized with joy, the contented eyes of the young dress-maker taking home her work and seeing straight before her the coming Sunday walk with some one who is counting the intervening hours as gladly as herself, while the hands of every clock keep pointing to that meeting. Kindred of hers are the little families of the artizan or workman, father, mother, babe, and small toddler needing to be lifted up steps and carried over rough places. The joy in the evening or Saturday holiday, the delight in possession of the children so evidently envied by the public of the 'bus,' the pride in the gay dress of those cherished atoms, so difficult for the mother to get, with all her industry and cleverness ; by all these distinctive signs is happiness recognizable in the little family groups so often travellers by the Saturday 'bus.' Allied to them is the young

clerk with the tranquil face, reading his evening paper on the way back from his office to a real home. You can see over his shoulder the kind, thrifty help-meet and the neat fireside that are awaiting him. And first cousin, once removed, to these is the German daily governess returning to the lodging which she shares with a compatriot friend, a double of herself, her intelligent eyes, fresh from the pages of Goethe and Schiller, now turned restfully on the frugal but genial supper with the friend, and the hour with her enjoyable book, and her tired feet on the fender.

Many more than all these notes of human life were garnered by Arno as he fared along, walking miles in each day, coming home with the spoils of his pencil in his portfolio, and in his brain the precious store of experience which was to be food for his genius to work upon. A bridal party poured from a magnificent mansion; mourning coaches were drawn up before another as splendid, ready for the last procession to the cemetery, the last display of wealth which could do no more for the glory of the worldling. It was not merely that certain facts were borne in on the mind and soul of Arno as on many another, but that the signs and the little marks and tokens of great truths were visible to him in the expressions of figures and faces to which ordinary eyes are blind, such seeing only ordinary pathetic occurrences, with surface meanings sad enough, but common and trite as platitudes of speech.

So with his seeing and reading eyes, and his interpreting imagination, Arno passed along through the lanes, the great thoroughfares, the gilded neighbourhoods, the fashionable promenades, taking from London what one day he would return to her with a wonderful spiritual usury.

During all this time he was not forgetful of the affairs that had brought him to the city, calling every morning at the office of the owners of the patent, and receiving the same answer to his enquiries to wait, that the principal whom he must interview was absent on business.

At last one morning he was informed that the gentleman had returned and would see him.

Arno stated his desire to know the name of the inventor of the new machinery.

"There is no real difficulty about the matter," said the man of business. "At first he thought it advisable to keep in the background, I conclude for reasons of his own with which we have no concern. Things being now established on a solid and permanent footing, there is no longer the same desire for reticence."

"What is the name?" asked Arno.

"He is Mr. Harvey Durrant, partner in the firm of Montgomery and Sons of Bleachgreens, County Antrim," was the reply.

"Then, sir," said Arno, "I must tell you that this supposed inventor is a thief, who has committed a fraud on the real inventor, Colonel Stevenson, who has been engaged on the work for years——"

The man of business stared at the youth over the rims of his spectacles and smiled a cold smile.

"Just so," he said. "We are accustomed, I may tell you, to claims of this kind. The idea is not at all original. It is quite usual for persons who fancy their own cleverness, to assert, perhaps believe, that some production of their own which has hung fire has anticipated the finished and stereotyped work of practical genius."

"This is not a case in point," protested Arno. "Colonel Stevenson——"

"Excuse me, my time is precious," said the business man, "I have an appointment more than due——" and he rose and rang a bell.

"You shall hear more of this—you shall hear from me again," said Arno, white with indignation.

"Doubtless," said the man of business with an air of stolid indifference.

A clerk appeared to show Arno to the door; and he went.

Chapter XL

The Colonel declares War

THE news came on Arno with almost as great a shock as though he had not been prepared to hear the name of Harvey Durrant mentioned in reply to his enquiries. There had been deep in his mind an unconscious reserve of faith in his old friend, and a latent expectation of some quite unlikely but possible combination of circumstances which would account by coincidence for the extraordinary disappointment of the Colonel's hopes and efforts. As he hastened back to the Casentino he was at a loss to imagine what steps the Colonel would now take in the matter. Would he remain silent under the wrong, or would he rise up and assert his right?

He found the Colonel placidly engaged on the first beginnings of a new invention, and apparently thinking little of the object of Arno's expedition to London. But he threw aside his drawings and joined Sara and the *padre* in their jubilation for the return of the messenger.

"I'm sorry you had all that trouble," he said; "and of course it has ended in nothing. I am busy now on a new idea, and I don't intend crying over milk that is spilt."

"Well, sir, I am grieved to say I have got the information I went to seek, and you will not be glad to hear it. The patentee of your invention and the declared inventor is no other than Harvey Durrant."

The blood rushed to the Colonel's face, and then left it white,



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"THE COLONEL WAS SILENT"

"Are you assured of this?" he asked. "Can there be no probability of mistake?"

"None, sir. The inventor is Mr. Harvey Durrant, partner in the firm of Montgomery and Sons at Bleachgreens, County Antrim. I was ordered out of the office for having dared to accuse him of fraud and to assert your right——"

The Colonel was silent.

"You will take the matter up, Colonel Stevenson? You will not be silent under the injury?"

Suddenly the Colonel spoke loud, and struck his hand on the table.

"No, I will not be silent. By Heaven I will speak, and let the truth be known!"

He was now thoroughly roused, and immediately set about writing to Harvey and to Robert Montgomery.

But it was not an easy task, and more than once he broke down over it, feeling keenly the bitterness of accusing an old friend and of ruining the happiness of the Montgomery family. In the midst of his struggle a letter from Mark announced the marriage of Harvey and Herminia, enclosing a paper descriptive of the nature of Harvey's invention, and giving particulars of the results of its working in the mills. The wedded pair had gone to Switzerland for their honeymoon.

"I must wait for their return," said the Colonel. "I cannot accuse him to Robert behind his back."

So the action in the matter was deferred, and Sara began to fear that ultimately she should have to take it in her own hands. It seemed possible that grief for the tragedy for his friends would overcome his anger at an audacious fraud, and frustrate his intention of claiming justice.

A few weeks passed, and Sara and Arno were asking each other whether or not they must remind her father that he ought not longer to delay, when one morning, to their surprise and relief, he remarked that he had written his letter to Harvey, and was about to post it.

"Will you not let me see it?" asked Sara.

"Oh, you can read it," said the Colonel; "but take it away and do not let me see it again. It has cost me as much as if I had written it in my blood."

Sara read it through her tears, not so much for the reproach to Harvey Durrant and Robert Montgomery as for the pain of the writer, which was evident in every line. The gist of it was: "You came to me as a friend, you took my confidence, you pretended sympathy, and you gave me false counsel. And meanwhile you were plotting to rob me of the fruit of my brain, the result of my years of labour."

Sara posted the letter at once, lest her father should relapse into tenderness and want to recall it.

And after that there was a pause, when life at the Casentino seemed to go on as usual, but was lived on lines of extreme tension, while every one waited, with mind abstracted from the work in hands, expectant of Harvey's reply to the Colonel's indictment.

At last the answer came. The Colonel read it and threw it across the breakfast table to the young people.

"I think we may be said to know Durrant thoroughly now," he remarked, and took up his English newspaper. "For cool audacity this document can hardly have an equal."

Sara and Arno read it eagerly together.

"No words can express the surprise with which I have received your extraordinary letter," wrote Harvey. "You take my breath away by the claim you make to be the originator of the invention which has cost me so much labour, has been so successful, and has brought me so much good fortune. I strive to restrain my indignation, knowing that of late you have been in delicate health, and fearing that your mind may have become affected. I have not told Robert Montgomery of your extraordinary communication, hoping to shield you by giving you time to reconsider this matter, and to withdraw your unaccountable charge against me."

"He has not told Montgomery," said Arno. "Well, we must save him the trouble of doing so. If your father does not do it himself I will write in his name."

But the Colonel was thoroughly roused, and had no intention of letting the matter drop.

His letter to Robert Montgomery gave a detailed history of his work on the invention, the motives that had inspired him, the labour he had expended on it, his feeling with regard to keeping the matter secret, his reasons for confiding only in his daughter Sara, Arno Warrender, and Harvey Durrant. He dwelt on the interest developed gradually by Harvey in the invention, though at first he had shown little understanding of it, and no enthusiasm for its purpose or its uses. Finally he pointed to Harvey's conduct in advising him to delay the patenting of the work. Having sent away this second letter the Colonel was ill for several days, and nobody dared to mention the subject to him.

When he spoke of it again it was to the *padre*, who sat by his side, striving to console him with counsels of perfection in brotherly love, and in heroic patience under wrong.

"I could bear the loss of my honours perhaps," said the Colonel, "but Sara has the right to profit by the gains of her father's effort. I am sorry for the pain to Robert, but the interests of my child come first. I was never a rich man, and I have spent a good deal of money on my fads, and on the working out of this particular invention. The fortunate result is for her, and if there is justice to be had in the world I will get it!"

In a little while his courage returned, and he waited, now calmly, now feverishly, for a reply from Robert Montgomery.

Many times he asked himself how his old friend would regard this painful disclosure, bringing an accusation of crime into the circle round his fireside. Herminia's husband, the man so long admired and loved, trusted, denounced as a thief and a dealer in treachery!

"It is enough to kill him," thought the Colonel. "I wish my hands as well as my legs had been shot off before I meddled with such things as were doomed to work out this misery."

These were his thoughts, which he uttered to no one.

Having declared war, he was resolved to stand to his guns, and expressed no regret for having taken the only course open to him.

"I wish he would talk more," said Sara to Arno. "He is suffering in silence what he is ill able to bear. Why does not Robert Montgomery make haste to answer him? The reply would give him something to talk about, to write about. A lively correspondence running on would occupy him and supply a vent for his feelings. I fear for the consequences of this suspense——"

"Don't be afraid," said Arno. "The Colonel's pluck will stand to him. His courage will defend him even against the tenderness of his own heart."

At last the important answer came. All the Colonel's fortitude was white in his face as he broke the seal with which Robert had guarded the letter discussing a question so terrible in all its bearings.

Arno and Sara, who were hanging round his chair, withdrew to some distance to let him read the letter first alone.

He read with amazement. Robert wrote more in sorrow than in anger. The letter began by deploring the breach in the old friendship which had been made some few years before, and had gradually widened. There were hints at the conduct of Arno and Sara as the causes of that breach. The writer did not like to say that ill-feeling had culminated in the strange accusation made against the man who had just become his son-in-law, and at such a moment; he preferred to think that the Colonel had made a mistake, originating in his own desire to do something of the kind illustrated by Harvey Durrant's brilliant invention.

"I do not doubt," wrote Robert, "that you have been engaged on attempts to make use of your leisure in some such manner. But to put the matter in the mildest way, was it likely that you, who knew nothing of the working of the machinery of a mill, whose experiences have been all on such different lines, could have the practical knowledge which has

enabled Harvey Durrant to attempt this work, and to bring it to such a successful issue? You may, as you say, have models and drawings to show your progress, you may have asked advice of Harvey as one who was acquainted with the mechanism of machinery. I do not doubt that Arno Warrender and your daughter are ready to bear witness to your ardent pursuit of this ideal undertaking, which in your circumstances must be only a dream. But all your evidence does not persuade me of villainous conduct on the part of one who has long enjoyed my utmost confidence, and who is now allied to me by the closest family tie.

"In conclusion, I must add that I hope on studying Harvey's fine work and comparing it with your own amateur efforts, you will come to see your mistake and retract your accusation; also that in the years to come there may be a renewal of the friendship which neither you nor I, had we been independent of the action of others, would ever have been likely to rupture."

When Sara and Arno returned they found the Colonel sitting with his head bowed on his hands, the letter lying crumpled on the ground.

After some time it was found, however, that this last blow, if it had hurt him more bitterly than Harvey's treachery and insolence, had even more effect in spurring the Colonel to defend himself by asserting the justice of his claim. That he should be written down as a weak potterer, meddling with things he did not understand, a vain fool, imagining he had achieved something which was far beyond his powers to compass, an ungenerous friend, enviously seeking to rob another man of hard-won success, was more intolerable than the loss of his honours and his profits.

When next he spoke on the painful subject it was to announce his intention of going to England, and there placing the affair in the hands of a solicitor. And by the end of a month Sara and he were located in London, and war had been declared with Bleachgreens.

Chapter XLI

The Effect at Bleachgreens

THE Colonel's letter denouncing Harvey to Montgomery came with a violent shock on the household at Bleachgreens. An earthquake could scarcely have shaken it more to its centre. As Harvey had given no hint of the affair to any one there was nothing to break the fall of the blow. The news arrived at the breakfast table, and Robert's impetuous temper getting the foreway of his prudence prevented his exercising that reserve which his better judgment might have thought desirable in so serious a matter. His exclamations of indignation attracted the notice of all at the table, and within an hour Colonel Stevenson's malice or madness was the subject on which Jane and her sons and daughters were ringing the changes. Robert lost no time in laying the letter before Harvey.

"Well, sir, what do you think of it?" said Harvey. "This is not the first I have heard of it;" and he produced the Colonel's letter to himself.

"What do *you* say to it?" said Robert, striking his desk with his hand.

Harvey shrugged his shoulders.

"Do you think such a charge is worth notice?" he said. "Is the story a likely one?"

"I do not think it a likely one, and coming from any one else I should say it was not worth notice. But from my old friend Stevenson it must have attention," said Robert more calmly.

"True," said Harvey, "and you must reply as you think fit, so long as you maintain that the work and the patent are mine. No use, I think, in taking him too seriously. I observed long ago that the good gentleman had a fad on the subject of mechanics. He was always trying to get advice and information from me on petty points which showed his ignorance and the flimsiness of his little attempts at invention. A new sewing machine was occupying his attention when last I visited his toy workshop. Unfortunately, he found that the little improvement he was dreaming about had been patented and was in use before he had begun to think about it. From a man so childish as that, what can you expect——"

"I expected honesty and common sense from George Stevenson," said Robert.

Harvey dropped his eyes and looked mysterious.

"A considerable time ago I thought I noticed that his mind was growing weakened. When that sort of thing begins in a man of his age it is likely to go on. If you ask me I would suggest that you give him the benefit of this doubt, and reply to him granting that he really believes what he says. The charge is of course preposterous, and could not by any possibility be supported."

"You are a good fellow, Harvey. I have noticed this spirit of generous forbearance in you on other occasions. I will follow your advice and act on the conclusion that my poor friend has fallen too early into his dotage."

It was acting on this suggestion that after much further discussion with Durrant Robert wrote the letter which spurred the Colonel on to greater activity in his own defence.

"Let us say no more about it," said Montgomery to his wife, "I have written to the Colonel all that is necessary to free him from what is evidently a delusion. He is quite incapable of doing anything malicious or fraudulent."

But Jane had not waited for such a caution, and hastened to take the news to Herminia, who was just getting settled in her new home, a handsome place in the neighbourhood, far

outshining Bleachgreens in the costliness of its appointments. Herminia was flitting about arranging the folds of her drawing-room curtains of silk brocade when her mother appeared, flushed and panting with excitement. The tale of the Colonel's wickedness was quickly told, and Herminia expressed her contempt and disgust at his conduct, while she seated herself behind the new silver tea equipage which was part of that rich spoil known as "the wedding presents."

"I never liked him," said Mrs. Harvey Durrant, "and Sara is worse. I really believe she has something to do with this. I always thought she was jealous of Harvey's preference for me."

"You don't mean to say that she would get up this plot in revenge?" said her mother eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know. How can one tell? There must be some motive, and one is as likely as another. Harvey showed her plainly that he did not admire her. They were always inviting him to Donegall Place, the Colonel to make use of his brains, it seems, and Sara——. Well, I have won the day!" said Herminia, with a glance at her splendid surroundings, "but certainly it was an extraordinary piece of audacity to attempt to rob Harvey of the honour and the wealth which his talents have earned for him."

"They deserve to be exposed and punished," said Jane, "but Robert is so quixotic he will be all for hushing it up. And Harvey is so mild and forgiving, he also is likely to let the thing pass. Already they are excusing the Colonel on the score of a delusion."

"A cunning delusion!" said Herminia, contemptuously. "To think of old friends behaving so shamefully. I shall have no patience with Harvey if he talks any nonsense about delusions to *me*."

When Harvey arrived home that evening after his conversation with Robert he found Herminia bristling with questions. When was it that the Colonel had taken this fad into his head about inventions? A mechanical extinguisher for a bedroom

candle? Had he known that Harvey was engaged on this invention for the mills? Had Sara known about it? Was not that their reason for inviting him to Donegall Place? Was not Sara always jealous of *her*?

"I beg you will not ask me anything more about it," said Harvey, "the whole thing is very painful. I had a great regard for the Stevensons. You must not try to persuade me to condemn the Colonel. As for Sara—well, a woman of your charms can afford to be generous to her less favoured sisters."

Herminia smiled complacently, but was not deterred from pursuing the subject, morning and night, till Harvey became so irritable that there was danger of a quarrel. He began to feel that he had not, after all, done everything to secure happiness when he patented the Colonel's invention and won the beautiful Herminia as his wife. Other anxieties besides that connected with the patent which was to make his fortune appeared already, hastening to meet him. Mrs. Harvey Durrant had begun her married life on large social lines, with an establishment on a scale of expense far beyond that of her parents or any of her neighbours, and with the intention of developing into a local queen. Remonstrance from her husband and her family were unavailing.

"Harvey is a man to make a fortune. Having begun with this brilliant invention, he will do a great deal more. At his age, with his talents, there is no knowing what he may produce next. So I tell him, and also that this is the time of our lives to enjoy good fortune. I despise people who stint and save when they are young. When they are old they are not able to take the good out of life which they might have had beforehand. When they die they leave their money for somebody else to spend. They say 'fools build houses for wise men to live in,' but I say fools save money for wise men to scatter. Look at Sir Jonah Cunnygham. If he had enjoyed his fortune when he was young, he would not have to let it all go to the Crown when he dies. What does the Crown want with

his little penny? Willows' Burn is not great enough for a Royal residence."

Jane listened in admiration of her daughter's philosophy.

"This dainty lace blouse, now," said Herminia, who was on this occasion trying on her new finery while her mother sat in her dressing room. "Of course I shall have a big bill at that shop; but suppose I waited for it till I was fifty, to wear it then would only make me ridiculous."

Jane, who was more than fifty, and fond of finery herself, winced a little at this statement, but it was part of her scheme of life never to contradict Herminia, who was one of fortune's favourites. She usually indemnified herself, however, for her submission to her eldest daughter by a severely arbitrary attitude towards her younger ones. Olive and Juliet were pretty girls enough, and had their admirers, but they would never have the style, or the splendid self-assertion of Herminia.

Robert was not so easily satisfied with Herminia's logic.

"I think she is going too fast," he said. "This thing of Harvey's is in demand at present, but there is no saying when something else will start up to supersede it. In the matter of inventions that so often happens, and it is a case of 'make hay while the sun shines.' If Herminia uses up all her hay, and the sun ceases to shine——"

"Harvey will always be a partner."

"We have Mark and Hugh to think of. And I do not see Harvey inclined to give his attention to further inventions. He seems willing to rest on his laurels. Perhaps he is not capable of doing any more in that way. A man may hit on one good thing in his life-time and nothing more."

While they were talking, Sir Jonah came in, having just paid a call on Mrs. Durrant, who had spared no effort to dazzle him with her good fortune, remembering the day when he had repudiated Harvey's claim to be recognized as his heir. After these two visits the old gentleman took his way to the house of Mrs. Fontaine.

"Now madam," said Sir Jonah, "can you tell me what bee

has got into the bonnet of our friend, Robert Montgomery? There he is countenancing the wildest extravagance in that daughter of his, and himself living in a fool's paradise of admiration of a genius for invention newly discovered in Harvey Durrant. Now, Mrs. Fontaine, you have always posed as a wise and a far-seeing woman. I am not a very sensitive individual, but I have always felt that you could see through me if I were built of bricks and mortar."

"I never got so fine a compliment in my life before," said the old lady, laughing. "What is it intended to lead up to?"

"Do you think that Harvey Durrant is possessed of talents to make an extraordinary fortune? Can you believe that he is a sort of second Edison, to be looked to for any number of brilliant discoveries for the uses of the world?"

"I confess I hadn't discerned the spark of genius in him," said Mrs. Fontaine, "but the fact remains that he has produced a wonderful improvement in machinery, and that it is bringing him money."

"Do you know that Colonel Stevenson claims to be the author of the invention?"

"George?"

"Yes, George."

"You astonish me. That seems as unlikely as Harvey's sudden development."

"One or other of them did it, however, and I back the Colonel."

"I can't understand it. I don't like Harvey, but can he be such an impostor? And how could the deception occur? Did they work at it together, or what?"

"The Montgomeries will tell you all about it. I take my stand on simply this: the Colonel is a sterling man, and Durrant is a sneak."

"I heartily agree with you there. But our friends at Bleachgreens have made a hero of Harvey."

"Some day they will have to pay for their credulity."

"What will be the upshot of all this?" asked Mrs. Fontaine, with perplexity puckering her brows.

"The Colonel means law. I wrote to him on the subject, and I have his answer."

"Law? Then he must have evidence. If so, Harvey is not as cunning as I have taken him to be."

"He is cunning; but cunning does not always mean cleverness. It is true that Stevenson's very integrity may urge him to legal proceedings, believing that justice must decide for the right. Quibbles and perjuries have little to do with a soldier's experiences."

"Poor George! and I have thought him so lazy and so easy going! He was always very mysterious about that laboratory of his. I thought he could employ his hands better than by pottering at what he did not understand. Many a time I reproached him for not spending his hours writing circular letters for me in the interests of my little charities."

"Oh, ay!" said Sir Jonah. "The rule of nature is for opposition and censure. The wasp wonders why the honey-bee is always hiding in the bells of the flowers, and keeping silence, while he is buzzing with all his might, and merely picking the red flies off the roses."

"I hope you don't look on me as a wasp," said Mrs. Fontaine, wrinkling her nose with a combined smile and frown.

"Only sometimes," said Sir Jonah drily.

Chapter XLII

“Art is much more than all that”

It was true that the Colonel had resolved to go to law. The soldier once roused in him would hear of no retreat.

“Harvey thinks he has got me in his trap, cut me off from all supplies, and obliged me to surrender,” he said, “but I will maintain my ground, and fire on him as long as I have an ounce of ammunition.”

The first step in this direction was a move to London. A lodging was taken in a street off the Strand, not too far from the solicitor's office, and the opening shot was fired in the shape of a lawyer's letter, informing Harvey Durrant that legal proceedings were being taken against him.

The next move between the combatants was a visit to London made by Robert Montgomery in the hope of persuading the Colonel to give up his intention of fighting a cause which he was certain to lose. The meeting was a painful one. The Colonel was sitting in his chair at the window of his room in the narrow street, with lines of care on his face, strong in his determination, when Robert entered looking grim and hostile. At the first glance exchanged between them, old associations, old memories rose up and gave pause to both before the bitter subject was touched upon, and Robert made known his errand in milder terms than had been intended by him.

“You cannot really mean it,” he said. “You are labouring under some extraordinary misunderstanding of the nature of

such matters. Have you considered the wrong you are doing to Harvey by bringing this accusation publicly against him, of the affliction to me and my family, now so closely bound to him?"

"I have thought of you and yours, and deeply deplore that this has been forced on me," replied the Colonel. "Have you, on the other hand, reflected on the wrong done to my child in robbing her of her father's property?"

"This is delusion," protested Robert with rising temper. "You will squander your daughter's provision on lawyers. They will take your money and laugh at your defeat. There cannot be a tittle of evidence in your favour. You will make us all notorious in an ugly manner, and will only injure yourself while you try to injure others."

"You are perfectly ignorant in the matter. That I am willing to allow," said the Colonel. "Why do you, who know nothing about it, come to talk to me? Why does not Harvey Durrant himself stand before me, face to face, and deny his dishonesty? Because he is a coward and only stabs in the back."

After this the warfare waxed hotter, and Robert left in a storm. Later in the evening, sitting in his hotel, something he had seen in his old friend's face troubled him, and he called again the next day and asked to see, not the Colonel, but Sara.

Robert could not help being struck by the girl as she came into the room where he waited for her. She had altered much since the day when he had accused her, by implication, in his office. Then she was in the rosy flush of the moment when a child becomes a grown girl, and was still a child in his eyes. Now, this tall, pale, slender young woman with the remarkable eyes, so clear, so dark, so luminous, and with a steadfast brow and mouth, impressed him as a new and a dominant personality. Sympathy with, and anxiety for her father, had matured her quickly and made her seem older than her years.

"I have come on an unhappy business, Sara," said Robert. "Having failed to persuade your father to listen to reason, I

am going to appeal to you. By entering on this extraordinary proceeding he will dissipate the little fortune which ought to be yours. He has no case to stand upon, and is quite in ignorance of the ruin entailed by an unsuccessful lawsuit. You have it in your power to influence him for his good and for your own.”

Sara was grieved, and from her heart extended her womanly sympathy to this old friend who had been kind to her in her childhood, before ever she had seen her father's face. All the sad issues of this painful case were before her. The family tragedy at Bleachgreens which must result from her father's success in establishing his rights was as vividly realized by her as if it had already happened. Her eyes and her voice betrayed her pitiful feeling.

“I am sorry, Uncle Robert,” she said. It was the first time for years that she had addressed him in that old childish manner, and he noticed it. “I am very sorry. But I cannot interfere with my father's action. As for my own fortune, that is of no consequence. If he were to lose everything I could make some effort to take care of him and to support myself. I should be an unnatural child if I did not desire to see his honour vindicated, and justice done to him with regard to his labour of years.”

She spoke slowly, with a pathetic reluctance which bore witness to her entire belief in what she said. Robert gazed at her in wonder, as she went on :

“You say he has no case to stand upon. It is true that Arno and myself are the only witnesses.”

“Arno !” cried Robert quickly, with a sudden scorn.

“Yes ; and I. We are both in your eyes discredited witnesses, I know, by whom wrong has already been done.”

“Nonsense !” said Robert. “You know I never really suspected you, Sara.”

“I am—I was—more worthy of suspicion than Arno,” said Sara quickly. “The trouble of that day seems to me to bear some relation to this.”

"What do you mean?"

"Nothing that can much avail," said Sara. "I do not accuse any one without being sure of their guilt. I do not know what became of your bag of sovereigns. I cannot describe all the means by which Harvey Durrant contrived to make his own of my father's invention. But my father is resolved to sift the matter to the bottom, and I do not intend to thwart him."

Robert went away even more pained than he had come. Sara's manner and the steady assurance in her eyes impressed him more than the Colonel's angry defiance. As he walked up the Strand his mind was in a state of absolute perplexity. It seemed as if some uncanny diablery were at work. Impossible to doubt Harvey. And if the Colonel were mad, and Arno dishonest, how account for Sara's calm certainty? The only way out of the puzzle was to believe in, first, the monomania of his old friend Stevenson, demented by sitting in a chair for so many years; second, in Arno's lack of integrity, who to keep the Colonel's favour, and perhaps to avenge his dismissal from Bleachgreens, had been impelled to humour Stevenson in his delusion of the invention. As to Sara, her ignorance of the nature of the work her father supposed himself to have accomplished, and her implicit faith in him and devotion to his interests, must account for the extraordinary conviction which undoubtedly possessed her.

An hour later, as Montgomery walked up Oxford Street, he met an old friend just returned from India, whom he had not seen for years. There were cordial greetings and a lunch in a neighbouring restaurant; and after a great deal of talk about mutual acquaintances, past and present, at home and abroad, they turned into the street again, both having a few hours to spend in any manner that pleased them.

They were passing by a certain art gallery when the man from India exclaimed:

"Oh! by the way, I want you to come in here to look at a remarkable picture that is on view. The artist is quite a

young man. I knew his father; and, by the way, so did you. Poor Warrender was an artist himself, though rather a failure, owing to his bad health, perhaps. The son, however, has got his talent, with interest accumulated on the deposit! The picture, bought by a rich American, has passed into the hands of the agent who is exhibiting it. I went into the gallery by chance, and have since been making enquiries.”

“Are you sure you are right?” asked Robert. “Is Arno Warrender the painter of the picture?”

“Arno. Yes, that is the name. His mother was a Florentine, and I dare say he was born in the city. I feel greatly interested in this as an instance of heredity as well as for old acquaintance’ sake. The mother was a strong, hardy peasant, perfectly healthy and beautiful, as I heard long ago. The boy is a genius. His work is full of wonderful beauty as well as masculine power.”

They were now in the gallery, and made their way to the picture. A little crowd was gathered in front of it. There was the *padre*, alive, looking out on a world of strife and sorrow with the pitiful eyes of St. Francis.

“It is a great work,” said the man from India, “amazing for so young a man. He has studied in the best schools. Nowhere have I seen anything to equal it except in the Rembrandt portraits.”

“It is very good indeed,” said Robert. “Quite life-like. I am surprised. I did not think the boy could have had it in him.”

“You know him, then?”

“I think I ought to know him,” said Robert bitterly. “I charged myself with his education. I brought him up in my own place at Bleachgreens and gave him an opening at the mills. He did not value the advantages put before him. He preferred making his drawings to keeping my books.”

The friend smiled. “I confess I sympathize with him,” he said. “With genius like that, to be tied to a ledger!——”

“Very fine!” said Robert, “but the ledger means the first

step on the ladder of trade, that great engine for moving the world, developing civilization, even conquering nations."

"I am glad you have such a high conception of it," said the friend. "You have a true vocation for your part in life. But Art——"

"Very interesting, very delightful for those who have a taste for it," said Robert testily. "But for usefulness in the world, you do not mean to compare it with trade,—with manufacture?"

"No, I do not compare it. Trade is trade and has its great uses, its great material results. But Art is more than all that. To say that it is merely interesting and delightful to those who have a taste for it is like telling an astronomer that sunshine exists merely to make a fine day pleasant for a walk. Art as an instructor, a moralist, a spiritual interpreter—what of all that? It may be debased far below the level of trade of course, but——"

The enthusiast for Art paused, feeling that he was not carrying with him the sympathy of his companion. Robert was feeling irritated as he always did when any estimate of things failed to place trade, according to his ideal, before every other power that rules the world.

"Oh," he said, "I have heard these comparisons made before, and they do not convince me. An imitation man, sitting in his chair in a gallery for people out on a holiday to come and stare at him, and cry, 'how like reality!' does not appeal to me so much as the turning of a wheel that mimics the turning of the earth on its axis, and is as potent for the progress of mankind."

The man from India smiled and said, "It is delightful and refreshing to meet one who has such real enthusiasm for his calling."

This speech, somehow, jarred still further on Robert's sense of justice in the comparison of rival powers; as giving a colour of individual opinion to what ought to be accepted as an unimpugnable truth. While too generous to express his low

estimate of Arno's character and his reasons for having formed it, he yet felt more angry than ever at the revived recollection of all he had done for the boy, and the ungrateful result. That he should now be looked on as a great genius, an exponent of truth, a coming interpreter of the spiritual, seemed preposterous and impossible. He did not place much value on the particular judgment of the man from India, but the fact remained in evidence that Arno had possessed much more talent than he had given him credit for, and had managed wonderfully to push himself already to the front.

During the remainder of his visit he was occupied in arranging matters with Harvey's solicitor, who was quite satisfied that the case of the lawful patentee could not be shaken.

“If he stole the invention from the King himself he is the owner of the patent,” said the lawyer, “and it is in the very nature of inventions that it would be almost impossible to establish theft or priority of ‘hit,’ even where there was honest question.”

“That is not quite the way to look at it,” said Montgomery. “There is no point made of priority of invention. The charge is a charge of treachery and theft.”

This interview seemed to restore Robert to the just and wrathful state of mind in which he had arrived in London, before the eyes and the voices of his old friends had touched his good heart, and forced conviction to give way, for a time, to perplexity.

It was agreed that Durrant himself should come to London about his own business, and make ready his evidence, for the law-suit was bound to go on. The Colonel was resolved on it.

Chapter XLIII

“No place like London for work!”

ARNO was still at work on his picture of “Abraham and the Angels,” not so absorbed in his work but that he watched daily for news from London of the preparations for the Colonel’s law-suit, and of the life of father and daughter in the midst of this painful business. Sara’s face was always before him in the three angels, who truly enough represented three various sides of the girl’s character, the strong and steadfast, the radiantly intelligent, the tenderly pitiful and loving. In the ardour of his enthusiasm he allowed himself only an hour’s walk in the dawn, and another for talk with the *padre* over their coffee in the afternoon. All the other available hours of the early morning and the cool of the evening were devoted to work.

It was during one of the talks over the coffee that the letter arrived informing him of the fact that his portrait of the *padre* was on exhibition in London.

“This is from Frank Hurst, my generous American patron. What has he to say to me now?” said Arno, opening the envelope.

Then a shout of triumph broke from him. His Italian blood rushed to his head. He tossed the letter in the air with the gleeful joy of a child.

“What now?” asked the *padre*.

The English side of Arno’s nature now asserted itself. He

was calm in an instant, and handed the letter to the *padre*, saying :

“Our picture, your portrait, is a success. It is on view in London, and people are praising it.”

The *padre's* eyes shone.

“You have deserved this,” he said. “If only your poor father could have seen it !”

But Arno, who had never known his father, was thinking of those who stood to him for all kindred. His joy rushed to Sara, his pride called for the Colonel, his gratitude looked at the old man beside him, who was gazing on him through tears, and showering congratulations and blessings on him and his works.

“It is you who have done it for me,” he said. “The light in your eyes has been my lamp to success. It is that light that the world is praising. It is yours, not mine. Read what the London papers say.”

The *padre* read.

“I told you that you were dreaming of our Saint Francis,” he said meekly. “You see the public has perceived it. You have painted the *poverino*, not me.”

Arno hardly heard. He had gone back to the letter.

“Come here at once,” wrote Hurst. “I can put you up. I want to talk to you about that other picture of yours.”

“You must go immediately,” said the *padre*. “Such an opportunity must not be lost.”

“Yes, I will go,” said Arno. He rose and drew up his tall young frame to its full height, folded the letter, and put it in his breast.

“I will walk in to them. I will carry my news with me. What delight to tell such things to those who have believed in me always—even through evil report !”

The picture of Abraham was left in care of the *padre*, and Arno started for London. He found his friend Hurst waiting for him at the Railway Station.

"It is too good of you," said Arno, as he was hurried into a motor with his modest baggage.

"I have always a fad on hand," said Hurst with a laugh, "and you are my fad at present. I have been looking up a studio for you. I hope you have brought the picture."

"Oh no," said Arno, "I am not in a position to take a studio in London. I shall return to the Casentino."

After a bath and breakfast at Hurst's luxurious club, Arno was eager to set out to see the Stevensons.

"They are very dear friends of mine," he explained, "and they are in a state of anxiety at present. I have a double reason for wishing to see them at once, to learn how things are going with them in a pending law-suit, and to make known my own good fortune."

"Is it very indiscreet in me to ask leave to accompany you?" asked Frank Hurst. "It would be a great pleasure to me to tell your friends something of the praises I have heard of your work."

"You are truly most kind to think of coming. I can answer for the welcome they will give you," said Arno, glad of any opportunity of gratifying so generous a friend and patron, though he would have preferred to pay his first visit to Sara and the Colonel alone. He acknowledged that he owed a little sacrifice to one who had so turned the scale of fortune in his favour, whose brotherly manner promised the happiest relations for the future.

"You mustn't let me be a bear," said Frank with his hearty laugh. "I have been spoiled by prosperity since ever I was born, getting my own way in everything. If you find me rushing in where I ought not to tread, I beg you will snub me. I am as destitute of relatives in the world as you are yourself, and somehow, from the first moment I saw you, I felt that there was some kind of invisible bond between us."

He was a big, burly, fair-haired man, about ten years older than Arno, with a rather loud but pleasant voice, and a good humour that was always seeking a vent by the pouring out of

money for the benefit of somebody. With a natural taste for the beautiful he had resolved on becoming a patron of the arts; and to seek out young genius and further its development was one of his methods. In Arno he had found a subject after his heart, not only in the genius that rang true, but in the fresh personality which had won and gained on his affection.

“They will be very glad to see you,” repeated Arno. “They are so truly my friends that they make my friends and my fortunes their own. They know that your purchase of the portrait has been the means of giving me a start in life.”

So encouraged, Hurst put his big blunt hand through Arno’s slender arm, and the two thus linked in a bond that was to last proceeded on their way to the Strand. Arno thought he had never seen that crowded thoroughfare look so smiling and so good, under sunshine that seemed radiant with a promise of happy things in store for the entire world.

To be young, to have power, to be elected as an apostle of Art! Well might the sun shine, since a poor man might walk the earth, an uncrowned king!

The Stevensons had already heard the news. The newspapers and the posters had given it to them. Sara described gleefully how as she walked beside her father’s chair on their way to the solicitor’s office a sandwich man between his boards had first told her of Arno’s triumph, in glaring letters.

“Great picture on view at Oldham’s Gallery. Portrait of an Italian ecclesiastic by Arno Warrender.”

The Colonel had insisted on having his chair carried up to the gallery, and had sat there gazing at the picture and listening to the praises of the visitors who passed before it. In this way he had missed his appointment with his lawyer, and they had just arrived at home.

“There is plenty of time for the law,” he said. “Heaven knows it is slow enough, and I am sick of keeping appointments. It was delightful to have a fresh taste of contentment, and to see that justice is still alive in the world.”

"He is as pleased as if he had won his case," said Sara, laughing.

She had thrown aside her hat, and the sun, that had managed to get through windows almost overshadowed by the high houses opposite, was dancing in her eyes and round her head as if enchanted to have caught pure unselfish joy in any human countenance. Frank Hurst gazed at her in rapture, and while he stood aside a witness of the jubilation of these friends, he took in his impulsive fashion a sudden resolution as to his own movements.

"I will belong to this family," he said to himself. "I will be an orphan no longer. I will make my plans so as to remain near my adopted kindred."

After a proper interval he came to the front and said :

"Now, Colonel Stevenson, you must persuade Arno to stay in London. I am a bit of an artist myself, at least I love to potter with paint and canvas, with interruptions of disgust, when I run away from my failures. I have taken a studio in the Fulham Road for a year (this was anticipating, but the fib was a very white one), and I want a congenial soul to share it with me. I could not bear it alone. It would be lonely, and besides I don't like being laughed at. If Warrender will set up his easel there it will give dignity to the place and be a cover for my poor efforts. He thinks he must go back to the Casentino, but we will persuade him to send for the picture. The Casentino is a place in which to dream beautiful dreams and plan sublime efforts. But there is no place like London for doing work when the materials have been gathered.

This was a truth that no one could deny. All the objections that could be urged and the hesitations on various points that were made, were at last swept away by the good-humoured wilfulness of the "pampered American," as he called himself, the man of great wealth and no ties, who had found for himself a new interest in life, and would not be baffled in his resolve to make the most of it.

Arno departed for the Casentino to fetch the picture of

“Abraham receiving the Angels,” and Frank Hurst set about finding the studio which he was supposed already to possess, paying many visits meanwhile to the Colonel’s lodgings in the street off the Strand, on the plea of consulting Arno’s friends as to some of his tastes and requirements. His broad prosperous smile and cordial hand-grasp always did the Colonel good, and his loud, hearty voice became softened and lowered the closer his acquaintance became with the Stevensons. Sara looked on him as a kind of prophet who had come to make Arno’s genius known to the world, and she was always glad of his presence because it was so beneficial to the Colonel, with whom he had long talks about the impending law-suit. His infectious optimism threw a rose-coloured light on everything, and, touched by it, the Colonel lost his irritating anxiety, and grew assured of success.

When Arno returned there was some excitement, some distraction from the consideration of legal quibbles, in the sympathy claimed by the two artists (as they called themselves) in the furnishing and arrangements of the studio. Sara’s taste was always being called upon, and the Colonel was willing to take his recreation, as he put it, in accompanying her to the Fulham Road. So plainly did he show the exhilarating effect of Hurst’s influence that Arno said to Frank :

“I am not sure that it is for the best to wind him up to such a pitch of expectation of a triumph. If he fails there may be a corresponding depression.”

“Probably,” said Hurst. “And I have thought of that. If there is failure I will carry him off to America and plunge him into new scenes and new interests. Between ourselves, I have very little faith in law setting anything right. Trickery, or the accident of circumstances, usually carries the day. Your trickster at Bleachgreens has probably laid his plans too well. But, after all, what does it matter? An invention of trade is no great glory.”

“I fear the Colonel will persevere till he ruins himself,” said Arno.

"Let him, then!" said Hurst. "With a daughter like that a man is rich enough. And as for money—why, the world is teeming with it."

Arno smiled. The appreciation of Sara seemed merely trite. She was far above rubies. The estimate of the value of the things of trade was that of a man who had never known need or opportunity for perceiving how the wheels were turned of a world which rolled for him on the easiest of velvety tyres. And he knew that the dreams of his friend's generosity were limitless. The few thousands which the Colonel might lose in his battle with a brief could be so easily replaced, said Hurst, since the world was "teeming with money."

"Not for all," said Arno smiling.

"Practically for all," said Hurst, "seeing that a few strokes of a pen can efface all the difference between two personal pronouns—'you' and 'me.' The process is always going on by which one purse is depleted and another is filled."

Arno smiled again. No use in vexing Hurst's big heart by theorising on the honest pride which is as much a man's valuable inheritance as are the millions which lift another out of the level way of ordinary human experience.

A timely interruption cut the conversation short. It was the arrival of Hurst's easel to be set up in a position apart from that on which Arno was already at work. Hurst laughed immoderately when he saw it standing with a large blank canvas erected on it, and a palette and brushes, with provision of many more than all the colours of the rainbow, and every artist's tool that could be thought of, placed beside it.

"I intend to have a picture in the Academy next spring as well as you," he said as he slipped into the working blouse destined to be well bespattered with paint before anything could take shape on the canvas. "Come, old fellow, advise me to a subject. I would rather have figures than landscape. I am afraid to begin on any one as a model, for fear of ridicule. The great painters usually painted portraits of themselves. Capital idea! I will begin with a looking-glass, and then

nobody can be offended. That gives me a respite, for I shall have to buy the looking-glass.”

Meanwhile he pulled off the blouse and went to order dainties for tea, as the Stevensons were coming to look at “Abraham and the Angels.” A part of the large studio was arranged as a cosy corner, with a tea-table prettily appointed, with silver and napery and flowers for favoured visitors.

Chapter XLIV

Sara's Future

HELPED by these distractions the time passed, bringing the moment when the case of Stevenson *versus* Durrant came before the Courts. Hurst was right enough when he said that the trickster had laid his plans cunningly, and Robert was not wrong in warning the Colonel that he had no case. The facts, as they appeared to the world, were all in Durrant's favour. On one side there was a retired military man, an invalid, who had no experience or particular knowledge of mechanics, or the working of machinery in factories, but with a taste for "pottering" at small inventions. Durrant visited him in his laboratory, took the good-natured interest of a young man in the ingenious amusements of an elder whose infirmities incapacitated him from otherwise employing himself. Doubtless the elder got some hints, some ideas from the man of experience, who was, on his part, energetically and with knowledge and power at work on the invention which had proved to be such a success. If Colonel Stevenson's dream were a reality, why had he not asserted himself in time? Why had he waited till the Durrant invention was patented, was in use, and found to be a success before coming forward with his belated claim? His client, said Harvey's lawyer, did not wish to press too severely on Colonel Stevenson, he did not impugn his integrity. No doubt he had persuaded himself that the idea had originated with himself. As for evidence the only witnesses on the Stevenson side were two young persons, one of them his

daughter, both of whom were ignorant of all such matters as were in question, and both loyally persuaded that Stevenson was a genius misunderstood and wronged. And so on, and so on. The case dragged along for some time; the Colonel refused to believe in his coming defeat. Expenses rolled up and multiplied, and when the Court decided in favour of the defendant, the plaintiff had to bear costs, the amount of which meant very nearly ruin.

The blow fell heavily on the Colonel, as Sara had feared. The worry of the trial, coming after the suspense of the preparation, had tried him sorely. His nerves appeared shattered, and again he was prostrated. Sara had to meet the expenses of a serious illness in London, which added to their difficulties. But seeing that her father was to recover she was not daunted.

"We can live on so little," she said to Arno. "I have seen this coming. Father never was rich, and he was accustomed to live nicely. Our income would have required care, and did not admit of extravagances. The invention and all that led up to it necessitated expenditure, and you see father was right in thinking that the money so invested would return with interest. So nobody must reproach him, even by a thought. All he did was right, was noble. I am now able to make a little money with my pen, and we shall get on very well—if only he can forget this intolerable wrong that has been done him."

As soon as he was sufficiently recovered to speak of his misfortune he desired that in future no one should mention the subject to him.

"It is all over now," he said, "I have fought my battle, and have injured those whom I desired to benefit. I will take up my life again as if all this had never happened. We shall be the worse by the robbery, but as God has spared my life I am still hopeful of the future."

The question of where they were to live on their reduced means was discussed. Sara thought the *padre* would lodge them in his little house in the Casentino, and allow them to share his frugal living. The Colonel would have liked to

remain in London. Mrs. Fontaine, who suddenly appeared in the midst of their counsels, had another plan, as to which she was very urgent.

"Now, George," she said, "you know I have a little money, nothing to boast of. I have always intended it for Sara. I can spare some of it for her, even now, and at my death she shall have everything. I desire that you will come home to your own house. Donegall Place looks desolate with the shutters up so long. Come back and face the foe. I have made up my mind that, in spite of unlikelihoods, you are right about the invention. You could not punish Harvey better than to live where you can look him in the face every day——"

The Colonel smiled. "We are not beggars yet, dear friend."

The old lady fired up. "It is cruel of you to take me like that," she said. "You know me too well to pretend to misunderstand me. You can live as prudently in your own old house as anywhere. It was only about Sara's future——"

There were others who were also thinking about Sara's future.

To Arno, the idea of Sara going to live permanently at the Casentino, just when he was established with his work in London, was intolerable. The return to Donegall Place was equally painful to think of. The Colonel's wish to remain in London ought to be gratified. Yet how could he interfere at this moment. Might he dare? What had he to offer——?

As he and Frank Hurst stood before their easels in the studio their minds were running on the same subject, each unknown to the other. Neither was in good humour for work. Hurst's sixth attempt at portraying his own good-looking and pleasant countenance was showing the same ludicrous features distinguishing the five that had preceded it, and which now stood, faces to the wall, in a corner.

"Posterity will after all have some difficulty in discovering what I was like," he grumbled. "Each of these fellows is a ruffian, of course, but they are not one and the same ruffian."

The last was grim, with a leaden eye; this one is hideously jocular. The first was an idiot. I forget the others, but they were all monsters. I say, old boy, do put down your brush and come for a walk. You have been plodding since early morning. Air and movement will refresh us both."

Arno was willing. He was aware that for some hours past he had not been improving his picture. They went out together and took their way in the direction of Hammersmith.

"Lots of people live out on this line," said Arno; "I like to look at the 'buses carrying them home. There must be many little nooks and dens, homes where people live on next to nothing, and are infinitely happy——"

"My dear fellow, put that out of your head. Nobody is infinitely happy, or even decently comfortable, who lives on next to nothing. Are you not tolerably content where you are?"

"Oh, me?" said Arno, "I was thinking of the Colonel. They ought to stay in London."

"Of course they ought," said Hurst, "but not in such a way as you are thinking of. Now Arno, old fellow, I am going to make a confidence to you. I am in love with Sara Stevenson, and I am going to propose to her. It will be the desire of my life to give her all the luxuries that wealth can buy——"

Arno did not answer.

"Have you nothing to say? You are a brother to Sara. You wouldn't be content to see her in a shabby little cottage nursing her father, on shortened means. Would you not prefer to see her in the prosperity which I can provide for her?"

"Sara's welfare is my greatest anxiety," said Arno quickly. "You have an enviable power to provide. If you can win her affection——"

"Ah, yes, I think she likes me," said Hurst buoyantly.

"She would not leave her father," stammered Arno.

"I shall not ask her to do that," said Hurst. "One of her

greatest charms is her devotion to him. But I fear you are not sympathetic. Can it be that you are jealous? You are not a lover. When nature made you for Art, she arranged all that. Women only exist for you in pictures, or as sisters—I mean for so ideal an artist as you——”

“What an observer you are!” said Arno. “You, if not Nature, are arranging everything for me.”

Hurst laughed and continued pouring out his hopes and intentions for the future. This glory was for Sara, and that pleasure was being prepared for her. Flowers were growing, and houses were being built for her. He had foreseen from the first moment of beholding her that the business of his life was to make her happiness.

As he rattled on, exultant in his sense of power, perfectly unconscious of giving pain, Arno walked silently beside him, pierced by every word, overwhelmed by the revelation of all that Sara had become to him, gradually, steadily filling his heart with a love that was rooted there, intertwined with every fibre of his being. He saw her the inspirer of his art, his comforter in trouble, encourager of his hopes, the bright companion of his pleasant hours. How could he see her belong to Frank Hurst, and be content to go on his laborious way without her?

And yet Hurst was jubilantly confident that he had already gained her affection; and had he, Arno, any solid reason for feeling sure of the contrary? It was true that Sara had been a sister to him, also that she was a woman in a picture for him, inasmuch as she had lent him her face for the angels. Against all that Frank had to give her, what had he to offer? Poverty and hard uphill struggle as the wife of an artist who had vowed himself to a high ideal?

Before the walk was over he had told himself that his only generous course was to stand aside and allow Hurst to pursue his courtship. If Sara accepted him, then it were better she did not know of all that her happiness meant, unhappily, to the companion and friend of years whom Hurst had described

as a brother to her, and as an artist who cared only for a sister, or for a woman in a picture.

Arno had started on this walk with a glad feeling at heart of things being all right with the world, despite the reverse of fortune to his best friends, who in their trouble had drawn all the nearer to him. But now everything was changed, and the remainder of the walk was a weariness.

As part of his confidence, Hurst told him that he intended proposing to Sara very soon, that he felt sure of being accepted, and that over and above his joy at the prospect of having such a wife, he was delighted to think of the relief it would be to Colonel Stevenson to see his daughter so splendidly provided for.

"I will take them both off to America at once," he said, "and you must come to us there. We will give you a great boom, and you will be the lion of the day."

"I think I shall stick to England," said Arno.

"Ah, well, we shall see. What? are you going back to work? There is the difference between the real artist and a humbug like me. I am off to the Club, and later I will drop in at the Stevensons."

Alone in the studio, Arno sat before his picture, but did not work. Sara's eyes looked at him from the faces of all the three angels, Sara in her different moods, all so delightful to him. He thought of her as the little girl who had been kind to him on the very first evening of his arrival at Bleachgreens, when the other children had not shown him that sympathy which his loneliness longed for, while his pride kept him from seeking it. Ever since then she had been his steadfast friend, his sister. Now, roused by the audacious claims of this other man, he knew that he wanted her altogether for his own, for ever and always.

Why should he not hasten and tell her so? Why ought he to leave her to another influence, ignorant of his hopes, to be persuaded that he only cared for her as a woman in a picture? Might he not urge his love, his claims of old affection before

Frank Hurst should have the opportunity of representing things from his own point of view, especially the comfort to her father, the safe and secure future for herself.

Frank was an attractive fellow, strong, protecting, munificent to such a degree that even his loud joy in his wealth was not, in him, vulgar, as it would have been in one less simply good and genuinely benevolent. Might not Sara be expected to prefer him to a man of poverty and dreams as her companion, her providence through life?

As the result of his long meditation, Arno resolved again, and more firmly, to stand aside in order that Sara might choose freely, uninfluenced by the generosity of her own heart, which might possibly respond in pity to his pleading, and choose what was not for her ultimate happiness.

In this despondent mood he decided to make a journey to the Casentino, a move long in question, to gather up some of his artistic belongings left behind there, and to bring them back with him to London. It would be easier to spend the interval of Frank's practical wooing thus, than to stand by, here, looking on at it.

The next day he went early to the Stevensons' lodgings and told them of his intention of going to the Casentino to fetch some belongings of his which he required for his work.

He saw that both looked regretful at his leaving them at that moment, but he said :

"Frank will look after you while I am away, and I shall not be long——"

"Frank?" said Sara.

"I mean Hurst, of course. He is very devoted to you."

He could not quite read the expression that passed across Sara's face; but it was stored among other things in his memory, to be examined afterwards.

"We shall be able to take care of ourselves," said Sara. "We did so before we became acquainted with Mr. Hurst."

"He is a kind fellow," said the Colonel. "You are quite right to go. And you will bring us news of the *padre*.

Meanwhile we must try to decide on our future arrangements."

"Yes," thought Arno, as he left them and walked away heavy-hearted, "they will be free to make arrangements for a happy and prosperous future, without having my pain to consider. God bless you, Sara; you are pitiful enough to injure yourself—I could not let you do it out of mere pity for me."

Chapter XLV

“Sara is one of these”

ARNO was warmly welcomed back to the Casentino by the *padre*, who was a little surprised at his fits of depression, seeing how joyous his letters had been of late, how full of delight at his unexpected success, and recognition as an artist from whom great things were to be expected. He put this reaction of spirits down to sympathy with the Stevensons in the reverse that had overtaken them, and remonstrated with him on account of his failure of trust in Providence.

“We must trust God for others as well as for ourselves,” he said. “Our friends will be taken care of.”

“Yes,” said Arno, and it seemed to him at the moment that the *padre*, if he knew of Frank Hurst’s desires and intentions, would look on them as a distinct manifestation of the favour of Providence in their case.

They were sitting under the vine-covered pergola in front of the little house, gazing as of old on the distant olive trees pencilled against the gold of the evening sky.

“Yes,” said Arno again. “Already Providence is looking after them.”

He was surprised at himself for saying it; but the *padre* was one of those persons who unconsciously draw the confidence of others, and are the recipients of secrets which they never would think of seeking, and never disclose.

“As how?” asked the *padre*, stirred rather by the tone of the voice than the words.

“A very simple and direct method, and one not unusual when Providence has got the case of a lovely young woman in hands.”

The *padre* turned his eyes on the young man's disturbed countenance.

“Sara is to be married, then?” he said.

“If Frank Hurst has his will she will be splendidly provided for, as the good fellow puts it himself. Does not that satisfy you, *padre*?”

“It does not satisfy you, my son.”

“Why do you say so? I love Sara, and could I deny her to the careful hands of Providence?”

“Sara will not marry anyone for a splendid provision,” said the *padre*. “There is more soul in her than that.”

“But enough money, even too much money, is sometimes the means of developing the soul within us. What opportunities it gives, or may give, to one like her for great experience, great intellectual advancement, great cultivation of the heart in charity!”

“I don't see Sara in exactly that position,” said the *padre*. “Do you? I can see her in a high, a noble place of her own, mind and heart developed, but not on those lines. Would you prefer to see her on the imaginary pedestal you have described?”

Arno withdrew his gaze from the olive trees against the gold, and met the *padre's* penetrating eyes fixed on his with an understanding smile.

“You know it all, *padre*,” he said. “No need for me to speak.”

“It is seldom at great crises that there is not need to speak. Hearts are broken and souls nearly lost for want of a word.”

“And hearts are dragged into sorrow, and strained with care by the claim of selfish words; souls are heavily burdened with the weight of other souls' burdens cast on them,” cried Arno passionately.

“Not such as are of the mettle of Sara. My son, I know

human nature. There are souls that would rather suffer through a high enthusiasm of love, through trials shared with another noble nature, than live as less living souls in an easier atmosphere of virtue and usefulness. These souls keep the furnaces of God's love on earth burning at a white heat. There are some of these working for God in this world in every vocation; the entirely detached who have followed the highest counsels of perfection; the self-less in perfect union with another, or with others, as centres of devotion in families; angels tender or militant in married life. These are the toilers at the furnace. Without them the sun's light and heat would be powerless to keep this old globe of ours alive and alight."

"And Sara is one of these?" said Arno under his breath.

"Sara is one of these," said the *padre*. "A lover's judgment is perhaps too much confused by the charm of externals to be able to judge fairly of a woman like her. Her beauty of face is only a poor reflection of her beauty of soul."

There was a long silence. Arno, deeply shaken by the *padre's* words, needed a little time to try to discern in what they were intended to apply to himself. His jealous mind still kept plunging after the idea that Hurst had, as a man, been found preferable to himself.

"Frank is an attractive fellow," he said, with seeming irrelevance.

"I have observed that," said the *padre*.

"And why should not Sara find in him all that would help her to develop her highest ideal, if she has given him her heart."

"Has she given it to him?"

"He is confident of it. A man like him could hardly be so confident unless she had given him reason."

"It is just because he is a 'man like him' that he may be confident without reason. Consider his case. He has all his life been accustomed to the power that great wealth gives, without always knowing whence the power came. He is

assured by experience that whatever he wants he can have. Now, a crisis in his life arrives which puts his power to the test, a test with which money has nothing to do. His unconscious belief in his own intrinsic merits and attractions have probably led him astray. To suffer a disappointment will be good for him.”

“He has been so generous to me I cannot be glad to see him suffer. I would give him anything in the world if I had it, except Sara!”

“It is not your fault if God sees fit to exercise him with a little pain for his own ends. The man is worthy of being perfected. And as for not giving Sara to him—how am I to believe you, seeing that you have run away and left her to him?”

“Not run away. Only given her air and room—freedom to choose. Had I rushed to speak first, or stood by to witness Hurst’s avowal, my pain would have been evident to her, and would have appealed to her generosity, and to gain her on such grounds would hardly have been less painful than losing her.”

The *padre* smiled, that smile of spiritual knowledge and human feeling mingled, which checked passion but did not irritate sensitiveness.

“You have set your standard too high,” he said, “You cannot climb to your ideal.”

“This from you, *padre*! Can an ideal be placed too high? Does not what you have just said contradict all you have said before?”

“On the contrary, it bears me out. To every flower its colour. The kind of self-abnegation required of me, for instance, is not required nor desired of you. For me there is personal solitariness, work in the kingdom of souls, helpful intercourse with those who are ‘weary and heavy-laden.’ For you there are Art and Sara, so ordained from all time and through all Eternity. You and she will labour also in a garden of God’s love. And we are so near each other that

we may look over the hedge ! You may borrow a flower from me, and I, from you——”

Arno sat with his elbows on his knees and his head in his hands. He was thinking the matter out.

“Go back to her, my son.”

“*Padre*,” said Arno, raising his head, “I must try to make you see what I mean. My garden would not bloom for God if there were a cloud on my sun. I should not be content with Sara merely as an ideal helpmeet, an intellectual companion, a pitiful soul. I could not be happy unless I had the whole of her woman’s heart.”

“Do I not know it? Have I not made you feel that I know it? And she? What about her ideals, if she could not *give* her whole heart?”

Arno stood up with a sudden movement of passion.

“God forgive you *padre*, if you have made a mistake.”

“I have read both your hearts. God does not make mistakes when He creates hearts like yours. Go now and give long thought to this matter. Passion is so often blind, and so sadly plunges in the wrong direction. Let us meet here to-morrow evening at this hour and have another talk.”

Arno seized the old man’s hand, pressed it, and went away for a long walk into the lovely country, visible only by starlight now that the golden glow was gone. The olive trees had crept together in masses of shadow, as if wrapped in each other’s comforting arms, the cypresses stood in twos and threes, apart, like lonely souls looking upward in darkness, patiently waiting for the light.

Arno’s love for Sara was having a desperate struggle with all those instincts of his own nature which, despite the *padre’s* inspiring words, would keep insisting on their own right to be considered, their own weight and value, and on the disasters that might ensue if they were disregarded. A certain proud humility, a sterner pride, a tender generosity, a brave anxiety for the welfare of the creature beloved, these were

banded together, clamouring for mastery, as members of a commonwealth.

Single-handed his love for Sara met them, each in turn, wrestled with them, and conquered. He walked back to the little house among the vines, resolved and eager, head clear, heart eased, and began at once to pack his things for the journey back to London. The belongings that he had come to fetch had stood ready for some time like soldiers waiting for orders to march. After a short light sleep he presented himself at the breakfast table and sat down smiling across the fruit and cakes at the *padre*.

“I am off to-day,” he said. “I can’t even wait for that talk this evening.”

“Here is a letter for you,” said the *padre*.

Chapter XLVI

Happiness

ARNO took the letter. "From Hurst!" he said, and paused a moment before breaking the seal, a big wax, with the writer's monogram bitten into it. Then a wide-spread glance hovered over the first page, trying to pick the meaning out of it without reading.

"Dear Warrender,

"I am an ass. This is no news to you, I daresay. You probably found it out long before I did. When I think of my blatant talk, my boastful confidence to you, I wonder you did not punch my head. Sara is a splendid creature, a sweet woman, but she is not for me. I tried to make her believe that if she would only wait a little before finally sentencing me she would discover my perfections, but she was quite incredulous. She likes *me*, awfully—as a brother—with the degree of liking which I thought must be quite satisfactory to *you*. I don't know whether it is or is not so to you, but it is not to me. At the same time I am bound to confess that no man was ever more gently and kindly let down. If I had not wanted so badly to be accepted I should have been awfully flattered and pleased by the manner of my rejection. You will say that no one is ever satisfied with what the Irish call his 'share of the world,' and that has not, hitherto, been my own impression. I now see that one can go beyond the limits of his satisfaction with a huge share of good things, by snatching at something that is intended for some-

body else, even if it be a small thing unpurchasable by money, or not to be gained by one's own fine opinion of oneself. Sara is not a small thing, but she is certainly not purchasable by money, neither is she to be won by the self-conceit of a vain-glorious idiot. Don't be apologetic for me in your thoughts, or feeling sorry for my humiliation, for I rather enjoy giving myself a slating which nobody else would venture to give to a millionaire, and I know it will do me a lot of good when I have got over the first sting of it.

"One thing more I may say to show you how complete is my downfall. Sara admitted, when pressed with an indelicacy due to my desperation, that she had found an ideal of masculine worth, long ago; that the ideal existed for her in the flesh, somewhere, to her knowledge, in this world; while it had to be confessed that my six feet of common-place humanity bore no likeness to that incarnation of spiritual qualities to which her heart was subject. Where the fellow lurks who is the embodiment of all that so powerfully attracts such a woman, and who does not hasten to claim his own, I do not wish to know. I might want to have something to say to him.

"I expect you will not find me when you come back, as I shall be off to America in a few days for a longish absence, during which I leave matters in the studio in your care, wishing all success to your work. You may turn all those interesting presentations of the phiz of one Frank Hurst to the wall—if his portrait is ever painted for an utterly heedless posterity I suspect it will be done by one Arno Warrender, R.A., if he is not too busy making records of all the crowned heads of Europe.

"And now this is good-bye to you for a while, my dear fellow and chum. I hope you will write to me regularly, and tell me all the news of our friends, in whom I shall always take the keenest interest. I am not too deeply insulted to feel anxiously curious to see whether Sara's ideal will answer to her expectations. If he should not come into possession of his own soon, or if his fine characteristics should go to pieces

before her eyes, perhaps I may eventually try to pick up a few of the cast-off rags of his attractions to cover the plain stuff I am made of—and try my luck again!

“My dear Warrender, believe in the steadfast regard of ‘yours as you demean yourself’ (to quote Queen Elizabeth),

“FRANK HURST.”

Arno rose and placed the letter before the *padre*, and then sat down again, watching the old man’s face while he read it through.

A smile kept growing in the *padre’s* eyes as he read, and when he had finished it overflowed his countenance.

“A true-hearted fellow!” he said, as he handed back the letter to Arno, who took it with a petulant movement.

“That is nothing new,” he said. “I want to know what impression, as to Sara, you gather from the letter?”

“I gather that she has done what I expected her to do—refused Mr. Hurst.”

“But this ideal, this paragon,” persisted Arno, impatiently. “Who is he?”

“Your jealousy has only shifted its ground?”

“Naturally. Who is he?”

“That is what you have to find out. You are starting for London.”

Still that smile in the *padre’s* eyes. Arno stood up, and drew himself to his full height: a tall, slight, nervous frame, a dark glowing face; there he stood, gazing over the *padre’s* head at a materially invisible something, looking at a delightful possibility. In another hour he was starting for London.

“God be with you, boy!” said the *padre*. “Give my love and my blessing to your Sara.”

“My Sara?” he said to himself. “Is she my Sara?” The jealousy of his nervous temperament, of his imaginative habit of mind, was still making suggestions such as warred with the happy hopefulness of his youth. One after another the lovely Italian scenes where they had been so joyful together before all this disturbance had begun passed before him and were left

behind, and he was back in the noise and hurry of life in London.

He drove straight to the chambers at Fulham. How vacant the studio looked without the presence of Hurst, who was only represented by his empty easel and the large canvases with their faces to the wall, which had variously caricatured his genial countenance. Arno did not dare to look at them. Through all his excitement there was a sense of regret for the loss of his companion and the cause of pain to the generous friend to whom he owed so much. Though not in mood for work, he could not forbear a look at his own picture, to see how it appeared to an eye refreshed and sharpened in power of criticism by absence. One glance told him that Sara, in the guise of the angels, no longer satisfied him. They were all three too ideal, too abstract. Truly, she was here as a woman in a picture. No wonder if Hurst had thought that she was nothing to him, except under such an aspect.

Now he wanted something different from all these, and he was going in search of it.

Where should he find her? He pictured her sitting beside her father's chair, chatting to him, reading to him, or writing his letters. How should he get an opportunity of saying all he wanted to say to her?

He was soon on his way towards the Strand, walking fast, feeling the bracing influence of the morning air and the rush of life in the thoroughfares. How would they meet; what should he say to her? There was so much to be said; how could he put it all into words? Suddenly he was aware that they were to meet alone in the crowd, that she was already coming towards him. He saw her face between other faces, moving nearer in the sunshine, not one of the faces of the angels, but just a young girl's face, fresh and human, with a joy of her own in her eyes that steered her safely through the throng, the eyes of one who could be a practical woman when called upon.

The next moment they had met.

"Sara ! Sara !"

"Arno ! Where have you dropped from ?"

What about words now ? Sara's parcel of papers, which she was carrying from her publishers', fell on the pavement as Arno seized both her hands and told his story with his eyes, heedless of passers-by, even of the good-natured old gentleman who picked up the papers and stood waiting to restore them, afterwards going on his way with a smile for youth and a little sigh for memory. A few incoherent sentences, and all was understood between them.

"I want to talk to you," said Arno, as they walked on together. "Will you come into the National Gallery ?"

They went in, and, moving slowly from room to room without seeing a single picture, Arno found his words, which came to him thick and fast. His hopes, his ambitions, were all poured into Sara's ears. At last they sat down, as it happened, before the portrait of Andrea del Sarto, painted by himself.

"Do you remember," said Arno, "one evening when I read aloud to you Browning's 'Andrea del Sarto' in *Men and Women* ? How often lines in the poem have come ringing in my ears since then ! I saw you in Lucrezia's place, and thought how different you would be. Poor Andrea !

" 'You don't understand
Nor care to understand about my art,'

he cried ; and then :

" 'All the play, the insight, and the stretch—
Out of me, out of me ! And wherefore out ?
Had you enjoined them on me, given me soul,
We might have risen to Rafael, I and you !
Nay, Love, you did give all I asked, I think—
More than I merit, yes, by many times.
But had you—oh ! with the same perfect brow,
And perfect eyes, and more than perfect mouth,
And the low voice my soul hears, as a bird
The fowler's pipe, and follows to the snare—
Had you, with these the same, but brought a mind !
Some women do so. Had the mouth there urged
'God and the glory ! Never care for gain.

The present by the future, what is that ?
Live for fame, side by side with Agnolo !
Rafael is waiting ; up to God, all three !'
I might have done it for you. So it seems.'

Again :

“ ‘ If you would sit thus by me every night
I should work better.’ ”

And :

“ ‘ Come from the window, love—come in, at last,
Inside the melancholy little house
We built to be so gay with.’ ”

“That’s rare tragedy !” said Sara, speaking low. “I hope you don’t see me in that house.”

“No,” said Arno with a bright laugh. “There’s another passage that haunts me :

“ ‘ I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if—forgive now—should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow for my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever.’ ”

“She wouldn’t,” said Sara. “Deplorable creature ! But if you don’t expect me to be like her, why should we sadden ourselves by thinking about her ?”

Then they talked about “a little house to be gay with” in the Casentino, and not so far from Fiesole, which should never be melancholy, and where work was yet to be done for “God and the glory !” where they would sit, on restful evenings, hand in hand,

“ Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly the evening through.”

It seemed as if they had been engaged, not for an hour, but since the beginning of all things, when they walked back together to the lodgings in the street off the Strand, to tell their story to the Colonel.

Chapter XLVII

“What have I got with it all?”

THE Colonel was not so surprised as might have been expected, seeing that parents are so often blind to the busy fingers of Fate, weaving under their very eyes the destiny of their children. He understood Sara, and appreciated her choice of a nature in sympathetic touch with her own, a companion whom her love could serve and help, admiring her preference for a life of ideal aims and desires rather than one of indolent material luxury.

It was admitted by the young pair that there must be a period of waiting before marriage could be attained. A happy engagement, founded on perfect confidence and irradiated by hope, was, however, the giver of sufficient joy for the moment, while the little house “to be so gay with” in the Casentino got every day a new stone added to it in their imagination. Hurst’s letters from America teemed with congratulations, and Arno returned to his work in the studio with a light heart and a buoyant sense of increased and growing power. Sara was also busily at work with her literary and artistic efforts, happy evenings were spent by all three at the lodgings in the street off the Strand, and Colonel Stevenson himself was beginning to forget his wrongs.

A letter from Sir Jonah Cunnygham interrupted this pleasant state of things.

“You must really come home at once,” he wrote to the Colonel, “if you want to look to the remnant of your property.

A tenant is offering for your place in the Glens, and there is chance of sale. Come back at once to your native town, and take an interest in this matter. You have a daughter to think of——”

Here the writer entered into particulars of the advantages to be gained by a disposal of the property. The latter part of the letter gave various items of news concerning friends and acquaintances.

“Mrs. Fontaine is as lively and wicked as ever, with her tongue at least, though people tell me she is always ‘doing good’ with her hands. Only last evening I had a sparring match with her, in which she worsted me, as usual. She sees more of the Bleachgreens folk than I do. Robert Montgomery is not the man he used to be. Something is preying on his mind, and I don’t care to be guessing what it may be. Mrs. Fontaine never liked Herminia, and in that we are agreed; neither does she like Durrant, but she is wrong in maintaining that I spoiled him, for he spoiled himself. I don’t believe that when nature turned him out of her hands there was much good in him to spoil. However that may be, the marriage is not a happy one. Herminia married him to have a good time, counting on his power of compelling fortune by a never-ending series of successful inventions, and she is disappointed, seeing that he has ceased to show interest in such productions. She is one of those women who seem to eat money, so fast do they get rid of it. Harvey himself looks sullen and downcast when I see him. There is a success in this world that is worse than failure. You will say this is a curious dictum coming from an old money-bag like me. But what have I got with it all, for comfort at the end of my days, except a tyrannous desire to keep my money, which masters every instinct to the contrary? There is not a man in the world to whom I would say this but yourself—the only man I know who has got hold of the right end of the stick of life.”

“Poor old Jonah! What is he coming to, I wonder? There

is a soft spot in him, somewhere," said the Colonel. "Now, Sara, what about this proposal to go home? Something is to be done about the old place. We ought to see about it."

"Let it, by all means," said Sara, "but don't sell it. One day we may be happy in it again. This is a world in which everything is possible."

"How do you feel about going back to Donegall Place? It will be necessary."

"I feel that it would be good for us. Also a trip to the Glens to arrange matters. Write to Sir Jonah, Daddy, and tell him we are going."

"And Arno?"

"Oh, he will be reasonable. Perhaps he will come to see us while we are there. We must not cut ourselves off from our own country, and we must be sensible about our affairs."

"You are right, little woman. Arno will have enough uphill work, and we must not throw away any means of making things easier for him. Your little portion must not be recklessly lessened."

Persuaded of the necessity, Arno proved reasonable, and the removal to Ireland took place, greatly to the delight of Kitty Canavan, who had long been grumbling at her continued exile.

"It's a grand world," she said, "and I'm glad I seen a lot of it, but there isn't an inch of it anywhere out foreign to compare with the Glen of the Waterfall."

Sara laughed. "I think it would hold its own at any beauty show of scenery, Kitty."

"And once we're back, child, I warrant we'll not stir out of it again," pursued Kitty.

"I won't promise you that," said Sara, "but I hope to enjoy many a happy day in it."

Late in autumn, the Colonel and Sara arrived in Belfast, and took up life again in the home so long deserted. The Colonel was more saddened than he had counted upon by the sight of the old rooms, so full of associations with the past. One visit to the workshop was enough for him.

“It makes me angry,” he said, “and I don’t want to live in anger. I’m too old to begin over again, though with success and recognition I could have done more.”

And he locked the door on the scene of his labours and hopes, and contented himself in his library with his letters and books. Old friends came round him, Sir Jonah and Mrs. Fontaine among the first, and there was a good deal of business to be done in the matter of the disposal of the property in the Glens. It was decided that Christmas should see them in that beloved spot, and that Arno should spend the holidays with them there. After that would come the arrangements for a long letting of the place, and a return to England.

The arrival of the Stevensons was cause of much surprise to the Montgomery family.

“What can the Colonel mean?” asked Jane. “After all that has happened one would suppose he would hardly like to show himself.”

“I won’t hear such remarks,” said Robert. “Whatever blunder George Stevenson made he believed he was right. He has suffered enough for his mistake.”

Jane tossed her head and went to relieve her feelings by speaking her mind freely to Herminia.

Mrs. Harvey Durrant was even more indignant than her mother at the callousness of the Stevensons to their own evil report.

“They have lost all *prestige*, of course. Nobody respects them. A man who could try to rob another of his property and his honour is just a thief, and a very bad kind of thief. Where are you going now, Harvey? When mother comes to spend an evening with us you might condescend to give us your company.”

Harvey, who had been about to escape, closed the door on the inside, instead of the outside as he had intended, and returned to his seat.

“And I will tell you in presence of mother that I don’t understand you,” pursued Herminia. “He is as much bent on

excusing Stevenson as father is," she added, turning to Jane. "One would think he had lost his cause instead of winning it, and that he was a stupid man incapable of doing what he has done. He is too lazy to exert himself to make more inventions, and meanwhile we are in need of more money than we can get, on account of the superior position we have had to take up. Then he is so dull and mopish, he who used to make himself so agreeable, that but for my trips abroad and a little society I should die of ennui."

"Oh," said Jane, "I don't doubt that Harvey has something wonderful nearly ready to surprise us. You remember how silent he was while at work on the great success. You must give him time, my dear; and, meanwhile, you ought to stay at home a little more, and try to spend less money."

Herminia raised her eyebrows and looked at her mother with eyes of angry astonishment. It was the first time that Jane had ever ventured to suggest to her that her conduct was not quite perfect. And in presence of Harvey, too! Jane departed with a feeling that she had made an unlucky breach between herself and her long-indulged and favourite child. Robert had many times remonstrated with her, but never before had Jane acted on his instructions, in the matter of an experienced mother's advice to an inexperienced daughter.

"But it is too late," thought Jane; "she has always had the upper hand of me, and she will keep it."

After she had left them Harvey had to listen to further reproaches from his wife. Why had he not worked up that new invention of which he had told her months ago? Wherefore allow his talent to be idle through mere indolence? If *she* had been gifted with such a power she would never have rested till she had made a huge fortune. At last Harvey escaped to his private room, which he still reserved as a refuge from an unhappy home, and where he was supposed to ponder in solitude, at times, upon wonderful results to be obtained by the exercise of his inspired ingenuity. Here in mysterious books he had sundry cabalistic drawings, which he

had shown to Herminia on occasions when her impatience demanded some assurance that he had not rested satisfied with one great success only, but was really in pursuit of other triumphs.

He turned over the pages of these books now to see if there were any set of hieroglyphics among them which would be new to her, and by means of which he could secure a little peace. He laughed bitterly as his eyes fell on one cheating diagram after another, none of which had any real meaning. It was too hard to be driven thus, seeing that they had already large means, more than sufficient, if only Herminia would consent to lead a rational life. Her continual complaints were causing her family to look on him coldly, they who had in the old times shown so affectionate a regard for him.

To escape from miserable thoughts he turned to his old resource, the betting lists, and plunged wildly in the direction of further unhappiness.

Accustomed to spend the night here occasionally on pretence of work, he now produced strong drink from a cupboard, and, encouraged by the stimulant, sat down to look in the face the unpleasant fact of the unexpected return of the Stevensons. He had first heard of their arrival from Sir Jonah Cunnygham, who had met him in the street, and told him the news with an unaccountably knowing smile, which had haunted him ever since.

What had Sir Jonah meant by that meaningly sardonic smile? Why should he bother about it? Was not that grim smile almost stereotyped on the old savage's countenance? What could he know that should make him, Harvey, tremble? Had not the law decided in his favour, and had not the world endorsed and applauded its verdict?

Chapter XLVIII

“Very sweet to hear”

A CHEERY little Christmas party assembled in the old house in the Glen of the Waterfall; Sara and her father, who found themselves in their old places there as much at home as if they had never left them, and the faithful Sir Jonah and Mrs. Fontaine, whose affection appeared to have been strengthened by the reverses of their friends. Arno arrived, with materials for the beloved work, from which he had no desire to take holiday, and several of the old retainers scattered about the glen gathered in, glad to take up service once more under the long-absent master. Sara sang again the old Irish songs to her harp, which had got a few new strings, and was made to speak after long silence; and the servants lurked in the hall, wiping their eyes or smothering their laughter, in sympathy with the mood of the singer.

Kitty Canavan went about sighing and groaning with happiness and importance. As a travelled person she had gained a great increase of prestige among the stay-at-home glen-folk, and it delighted her to stoop generously to the level of their inexperience.

“I declare it’s more natural here. I’m heart-sick with grandeur and glory of all sorts. There isn’t a ha’porth of comfort in it, and not much novelty either, when you get used to it. What’s the use of being made a king or a queen, if you haven’t the turf fire to sit down to? It’s like wearin’ a gold crown on your head always, to be doin’ your manners to



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“THEY RANGED THE HILLS TO MAKE THEIR SKETCHES”

great people from mornin' to night. It's true enough there's beautiful blue skies out foreign, but you do get tired of them, an' be longin' for a sup o' rain. The sun bes in great good humour to be sure, but I'd be glad to know where's the fine wet mist that's creepin' up the glen this minute, an' makin' you thankful for a natural cup o' tea and a fire of turf? You won't find it; no, nor the grand black clouds at the back o' the mountain yonder, makin' the day short, as it ought to be at Christmas; for if it wasn't dark at Christmas I'll ask you how would the kings see the star in the east that showed them the way to the stable at Bethlehem? Oh, there's many's the reason for thankin' the Almighty that yez are livin' and dyin' in Ireland.”

Arno and Sara appreciated the beauties and comforts of the glens quite as much as Kitty herself, and enjoyed the forcible and sweet contrast between the landscape and climate of Italy and those of Ireland. In the early hours of the day they ranged the hills, sitting on a mountain crag, or in the turfy heather, to make their sketches, and talking endlessly of the happiness in store for them.

There was plenty to talk about. Arno's picture was assured of admission to the Academy exhibition of the coming May, and Sara had a book in the press which had cost her a good deal of labour, both literary and artistic. Then there were the plans for that little house in the Casentino, and the hope of keeping possession of this dear place in the Glen, as a home to return to from time to time, as now.

The roar of the Waterfall as it sprang from the rocks above to the tarn far below, with its banner of foam flashing in the wintry sun-gleam, the squirrels scampering into the thickets with their spoil of beech-nuts, the clear thin song of the robin perching on the wet spray of bramble, all these things were as lovely to them as the golden skies of Fiesole and the olives and vines of the Casentino.

“Isn't it a funny world?” said Sara. “Here are we, father, and you and I, all under a cloud in the eyes of our friends,

and of many more, and we are as happy as mortals can be, far happier than those who have wronged us, if all be true that is said about them. Harvey is miserable because he has won his honours and his money at a terrible cost, and father is contented though wronged and robbed, because his conscience is at peace."

"And you are as merry as a lark though you have rejected a great career as a millionairess and have bound yourself to an ambitious adventurer with no more wealth than he can conjure up with a paintbrush!" said Arno.

"And what about you who have fettered yourself with an exceedingly unprofitable engagement?" said Sara laughing.

"Oh, me! I am the one of all others to be exultant. I have you, who have promised to stand by me till death. I have my art which is a kingdom, beyond all the kingdoms of the earth. My lawful ambition is a great possession, and my hopes are an enchanting company, never allowing me to be dull, or anxious, or lonely. I have some natural qualities that might have made me miserable if so many blessings had not been showered upon me. Without you I should have brooded over the wrong done me at Bleachgreens, and grown embittered in consequence. You it was who first encouraged my early work, and gave me confidence in my own power. Then the return to Italy, forced on me as it was by what seemed a great misfortune, proved the occasion of throwing me into the path of life I would have chosen from the first, had I been free. Looking back through my years it seems to me that Providence has wonderfully ordered my destiny and saved me from my weaker self. Therefore my trust in God, my faith in His arrangements for us are strengthened, and my courage keeps growing, to be ready for any and every requirement and emergency."

"All that is very sweet to hear," said Sara, "and as God has been good to you, so has He to me. Let us trust in Him together, while we live."

The three elders enjoyed themselves in their own way, at

the bridge-table, or chess-board, or sitting in a gleam of sunshine on the terrace looking down the glen, when Mrs. Fontaine's tongue went faster than her knitting needles, which seldom paused in their efforts to clothe the naked feet of the poor. Her war of words against the callous world of the wealthy was a continual amusement to Sir Jonah, whom she did not spare as she spared the Colonel, even while reminding her old friend George, that a man with a genius for invention ought not to rest in idleness, seeing that there were so many cruel methods at work in the universe for doing all sorts of things as ill as they could be done. Believing in the wrong he had suffered she made it a reason for his exerting himself to show of what successes he was capable, even were there no higher object to be aimed at.

While she lectured, however, it did not escape her that the Colonel was not as robust as he had been, and that the damps of the wintry atmosphere in his beloved glen no longer agreed with him. It were well if in future Arno and Sara should be able to shelter him from the rough season in that little house in the Casentino of which they dreamed, seeking the Glen of the Waterfall only in the summer weather.

It often happened that he joined his two good friends late in the morning, submitting to the careful arrangements of Mrs. Canavan for defence against his enemy the chill from those very mists which were preferred by Kitty herself to the warmth and radiance of Italy. On these occasions Mrs. Fontaine had a fine opportunity to discourse on her favourite subjects as she walked on the terrace with Sir Jonah Cunnygham.

“Your idleness is worse than George's,” she said. “He made a great effort, and did a good thing, and he has been checked by misfortune. You are doing nothing, and wanting to do nothing. Yet your life has been all good fortune--no failures, no cruel checks——”

“Ah!” said Sir Jonah.

“Now, don't growl at me, Jonah. You and I rolled our hoops together, and fought because I didn't care about play-

ing marbles. We are both getting old now, and I hate to see you sitting there at Willows' Burn on your money-bags, with nothing to do but to sneer at your fellow-creatures. Why don't you take a hundred thousand pounds or so and found an institution, to feed the hungry, or to ease the suffering. Have you even made your will, to dispose of your property after you have gone elsewhere, and can hold it no longer?"

"I have made no will," said Sir Jonah. "If I had willed my money to somebody else, I should feel myself in somebody's way; nobody would want to see me more, and I should be relegated at once to another world."

"You selfish old man! Are you willing to die without benefit to any one for whom you have a regard?"

"*You* are as old as I am myself," said Sir Jonah drily, "so it would never be worth while to leave my all to you."

"Don't jeer on so important a matter!" said the old lady, shaking a knitting needle at him. "You know quite well what I mean. Are there no young people in whom you feel an interest?"

"If you mean Sara Stevenson, I would like to do her a kindness. But I have a feeling that if I once made her the mistress of my belongings, I should begin to suspect her of sordid expectations. And I want to go on seeing her in the light of a thoroughly single-minded young woman."

"Trash!" said Mrs. Fontaine emphatically. "Did ever any one hear before of so absurd a cloak to cover avarice?"

Whatever reply Sir Jonah would have made to this blunt accusation if the conversation had not been interrupted, he made none, seeing the Colonel approaching in his chair, wheeled by the careful Kitty Canavan.

He was very silent for the rest of the morning, and walked alone in the glen in the afternoon, his hands thrust deep in his pockets, pondering the problem of the iniquitous tyranny of riches, from which he could not shake himself free. The habitual distrust of human nature which had grown on him with his years showed itself plainly now in the lines of his face,

while he persuaded himself that his disinclination to make Sara his heiress until his last hour had undoubtedly arrived, proceeded from a desire to look on her as a creature whose regard for him was unbought, and pure of expectation of any sordid recompense. He had quite made up his mind that he would dower her with all his possessions, one day to come, when he could no longer hope to call them his own for another hour. And the good fortune should come to her as a great surprise, leaving her kindly regard for him untainted in the meantime.

Mrs. Fontaine had worked herself into a passion in talking to him, and could not refrain from betraying it to the Colonel.

“I am more than ever convinced,” she said, “that riches are a curse.”

“Is not that pronouncement a little too sweeping?” said the Colonel. “Riches are of many degrees. To the poor people in their cots around us you and I are rolling in wealth, and to the beggar who asks for a potato from their charity they are also among the possessors of the good things of this earth.”

“Now, George, don’t determine to contradict me. You know very well what I mean. There is our friend Jonah. He was a very good-hearted little boy sixty years ago, and tore up his pocket handkerchief to make a bandage for me when I cut my finger one day with a pen-knife which I was forbidden to use. And look at him now!”

“I have known him do kind acts,” said the Colonel.

“A little. Sparingly. Yes. In proportion to his means, no!” said Mrs Fontaine. “He is afraid to be generous, lest expectation should be excited in the needy.”

“My friend, we have nothing to do with Sir Jonah’s conscience or his money. We have his true affectionate regard, I believe, and we find in him some admirable qualities. Let us consider him apart from his wealth, and be content with him as he gives himself to us.”

“Now, George, there is Sara——”

"Sara is all right," said the Colonel severely. "If I thought you really meant what you seem to imply——"

"I imply only that I know Jonah intends to make her his heiress. But he can't bring himself to take the step in time, and an old man's life is uncertain. He has no relatives, and if he dies without a will his money will go to the Crown!"

"Let it go!" said the Colonel.

Mrs. Fontaine picked up her knitting which had dropped in her lap, and knitted furiously.

Chapter XLIX

Sir Jonah's Message

It was evident that the winter damps in the Glen did not agree with the Colonel, and Sara was glad when he consented to return to town. Despite all her care he arrived at home with a chill caught on the journey, and was prostrated by an illness more serious than any of his former attacks. After a few days of struggle the doctor pronounced him in imminent danger, and hinted to him that he ought to arrange his affairs.

"My affairs are all arranged long ago," said the Colonel, "and I am ready to answer the roll-call. My daughter is my only care, and I am leaving her among faithful friends. I am an old soldier, and God is my Captain, to order me where He will——"

Sara would not give up hope, the doctor having admitted that there was a mere possibility of recovery; but her heart sank when she heard the dying man murmuring a desire to say a few words to Harvey Durrant.

"Why trouble yourself about him, darling?" she said. "It will only excite you and do you harm, and you have got to get well."

"Yes, yes, well of course. Better than I have ever been, as we shall all be, by and by. But I am thinking of Harvey. He will be a miserable man because he has a sin on his soul. I want to assure him of my forgiveness, so that the knowledge of it may help him in some future day."

"Brave soul! good soldier!" said Mrs. Fontaine when

Sara asked counsel of her. "Let him have his wish. Harvey is far from deserving of it, but God may have His own designs on the sinner. Thank heaven, we do not all get the deserts of our weakness."

Sir Jonah heard of his friend's strange request with a serious face, but presently a malicious twinkle came into his eyes.

"Couldn't be a better punishment for the rascal," he said, "though it is not meant in that way. I will undertake to be the messenger."

With a mixture of feelings, all characteristic of him, grief for his old friend's state, crossed by a keen desire to punish Harvey, and a sense of the grim humour of the situation in which the culprit would presently find himself, Sir Jonah set out for Bleachgreens and presented himself in Robert Montgomery's private office. Robert was not there, and Sir Jonah asked to see Mr. Durrant.

Harvey was at his desk, apparently very busy; but he was making meaningless figures on waste paper while his thoughts were engaged on matters other than the manufacture of flax into yarn and linen.

The news of the Colonel's serious illness and of the little hope of his recovery had reached Bleachgreens, and Harvey's mind was completely occupied with the consequences to himself of the removal by death, of one whose nearness seemed to be a constant danger to him. Were Stevenson no longer in the world he could breathe freely, but so long as the wronged man lived there was a possibility of a second lawsuit and a verdict reversed. Even without such large misfortune, there was the fear of reconciliation between the Stevensons and Montgomeries, the dread of a gradual growth of certain doubts which, to Durrant's fancy, already sprang up at moments in Robert's suspicious mind with regard to his, Harvey's, honesty in the matter of the invention.

He did not admit to himself that he longed for the Colonel's death, for he could not endure to think of himself as all

bad. He would rather he could have been all good, if goodness would have only led the way to prosperity. He would never have got himself into this mess of wrong and misery, if Sir Jonah had been as generous to him as he ought to have been, and if Sara had been as kind to him as Herminia had seemed, but was not, and never would be. No use in going back on all that now. If the Colonel was about to die, nobody could help it, and in dying he would lift a load of dread from Harvey's mind. Lost in these reflections, he was recalled to action by the voice of a clerk informing him that Sir Jonah Cunnygham was in Mr. Montgomery's office, and asking to see Mr. Durrant.

"What does he want with me? Is not Mr. Montgomery there?" he asked, startled, and fearing he knew not what.

"No, sir. Mr. Montgomery is out. I do not know what Sir Jonah wants. He asks to see you."

Harvey stood up and pulled himself together. Of what was he afraid? This visit was perhaps to announce Colonel Stevenson's death. Well, he had not killed him. He need not shudder to learn that fate had interfered to remove a threatened danger so conveniently out of his path.

In spite of his efforts to appear at ease Harvey looked pale and scared as he entered the private office and confronted Sir Jonah.

The old man looked at him steadily for a moment or two, with an expression in the eyes which did not tend to make Durrant feel more comfortable.

"You asked to see me, sir," said Harvey.

"Yes, my friend—I am sorry to see you are not looking well. It is unwholesome weather. Perhaps you have heard that Colonel Stevenson is——"

Seeing the look that leaped into Durrant's eyes, Sir Jonah paused. "Dead" was evidently the word expected by the listener.

"Extremely ill," said Sir Jonah, finishing his sentence.

The strange light went out of Durrant's face.

"Won't you sit down?" he said, "Mr. Montgomery will be here in half an hour. Yes, we have already heard of the Colonel's illness. I hope he is mending."

"He is as ill as can be," said Sir Jonah, taking a seat. "But it was not exactly to bring you news of his state that I came here. Colonel Stevenson is asking to see you. He desires to say a few words to you before he dies."

Harvey's face turned white.

"That is a strange request," he said, "considering all the circumstances."

"Dying men have strange fancies," said Sir Jonah, "and it is for the men who are to live after them to gratify them as far as possible. I must ask you to come with me now, as time is precious."

"I cannot go," said Harvey. "The thing is preposterous. Such an interview could only be painful and injurious to a man in his state."

Durrant had pulled up his courage to resist, and put on an air of sturdy rectitude.

"I think you must come," said Sir Jonah sternly.

"I will not come," said Harvey.

"Then you are a hound!" cried the old man, rising to his feet and advancing a step as if to strike. Harvey had retreated two steps for his visitor's one, when the door opened hastily and Robert Montgomery appeared. Instantly the two, who had momentarily assumed the attitude of combatants, fell into a more natural position, and both turned to meet Robert.

"This is sad news of our old friend," began Robert, feeling at once that Sir Jonah's visit was connected with the dying man. "I have just been to enquire. I fear there is little hope of his recovery."

"Very little indeed," said Sir Jonah, "though while there is life—you know the rest."

"Is there anything one could do for him?" asked Robert.

"He has expressed a strong desire to see Harvey Durrant,"

said Sir Jonah. "I have come here with a message from him to that effect."

"Ah!" said Robert, much impressed. "You will go at once, Harvey."

Durrant was silent.

"He says he will not go," said Sir Jonah, looking from one to the other of the two faces before him, Robert's concerned and pitiful, Harvey's hard and defiant.

"You can't mean to refuse such a request," said Robert.

"I do mean it. What good is to be gained by such a sensational incident?"

"Good feeling, at a supreme moment, between those who have been enemies. Perhaps the easing of a dying man's conscience——"

There was a sudden change in Harvey's livid countenance. Robert was watching him narrowly.

"He may want to ask your forgiveness for a wrong done to you."

Harvey breathed more freely at the words suggesting a view that might be taken of the Colonel's request which the darkness within his own conscience had prevented his seeing. But the reassurance only encouraged him to persist in standing his ground.

"He can take all that for granted, or by word," he said. "Sir Jonah has borne one message, and he can bear another. He has not done me any real harm, for which I have to thank the law."

"I think you ought to go," said Robert. "If you feel uninjured, you can the more readily forgive."

"Sir Jonah can take my word for it, and settle all that. Nobody can compel me to do a disagreeable thing, which I look on as quite unnecessary."

"I refuse to go back with such a reply to my friend's request," said Sir Jonah grimly.

Robert's eyes were on Harvey, whose sudden attempt at bluster ill agreed with the ghastly whiteness of his cheek, and

the nervous quiver of the mouth that made his utterance difficult.

"You must go," he said, "unless you wish to lose the respect of all who belong to you, and have believed in you."

Harvey averted his eyes from Montgomery's steady gaze and dropped into a chair, wiping from his brow the moisture that had gathered on it.

"You might understand," he said, "what a painful thing it is to stand at the bedside of an enemy who has once been your friend, and listen to his dying confession."

"We are not born to do only the things that are pleasing to us," said Robert. "The painful things have got to be done."

There was silence in the room.

"Stand up, sir, and accompany Sir Jonah, unless you are prepared to see me lose my temper. If you have no Christian spirit in you, remember you are living among Christians."

Harvey cast a wandering furtive look round the room, a glance that was the instinctive though aimless expression of a cunning nature at bay.

Robert was anxious to give him the benefit of a doubt, and said more mildly, turning to Sir Jonah :

"He will go with you. And if the Colonel asks his forgiveness, he will forgive."

"Humph!" said Sir Jonah. "Let him come at once, then, for there is no time to be lost."

Chapter L

Forgiveness

SCARCELY a word was spoken by Harvey as the two men walked together to the train. Afraid to resist Robert Montgomery further, he had complied sullenly with the stern command laid upon him, and sheltered himself under the suggestion that he was now proceeding on an errand of Christian charity. He was fully aware, however, that though he might deceive the hasty but generous Robert, Sir Jonah's eye had pierced through his subterfuges, and discerned the truth. Amidst the confusion of the thoughts that jostled each other in his brain as he walked, he grasped at the one comfortable assurance that the law was on his side, and that nothing could signify against the decision of the law. How could the last accusation of a dying man stand to reverse the verdict of a jury, unless it revealed some new and previously-unconsidered fact? Dying statements were supposed to reveal truth, but only when something was declared which had been successfully concealed. In this case everything had been thrashed out in the courts. Why, then, was he, Harvey, so shaken by this terror at coming face to face with the enemy he had thoroughly conquered? He could not tell, but his tongue was dry in his mouth, and his knees were painfully inclined to knock together.

Sir Jonah, on the contrary, was inclined for conversation, and talked about the linen trade and Montgomery's fine position, remarking on all the improvements of which he saw traces as they walked up the long avenue between the flowing

hard-working waters that turned the wheels of the mills, and carried off the washings of things purified, to be plunged in the big river beyond, and carried to the sea.

"Your invention has been a great step in advance," said Sir Jonah. "I don't wonder that the Montgomeries are proud of it as proceeding from one of their firm. It has increased their prestige, and that must be a very satisfactory reflection to you."

The words were friendly, but in the tone there lurked something which forbade Durrant to make a reply. The sound of the old man's voice overwhelmed him with a sense of fatality which was impossible to shake off, so long as he was under the uncanny spell of this hostile presence.

In the train Harvey sat sullenly in a corner of the carriage, conscious that Sir Jonah was watching him from behind the screen of his erected newspaper. Arrived at the door in Donegall Place, he said with an attempt at an air of indifference :

"I shall expect this interview to be a strictly private one. I do not desire a public confession from the Colonel."

Sir Jonah made no reply, and Harvey remained in suspense on this point, uncertain of whether or not he was to be accused and denounced by a dying man in the presence of witnesses, until he was led to the patient's chamber, and the door was closed on him from the outside, leaving him face to face with the thing he had dreaded, to pass as best he might through the ordeal he had struggled to shirk.

A glance round the dimly-lighted room showed no living presence there save his own and that of the quiet form in the bed, yet his restless fears urged the possibility of concealed witnesses.

"Is that Harvey Durrant?" asked a weak voice from among the pillows.

"I am here," muttered Harvey; "I am sorry you are so ill. You were good enough to ask to see me."

Harvey was speaking to an imaginary audience behind the bed-curtains.

"Come and sit here beside me," said the Colonel. "I want to see your face while I speak to you."

Harvey came to the bed-side and sat down on a chair placed as if ready for him.

"What can I do for you?" he asked in a tone carefully studied for effect in the ears of possible listeners.

There was silence of nearly a minute before the Colonel answered.

"Durrant," he said at last, "you are a young man, you may have a long way yet to travel through life, and you have a heavy burthen to carry. I am a dying man, and the burthens I once carried have dropped off my back, and left me light and free. I would like to ease that load upon your shoulders before I go."

"I am at a loss to understand what you mean," said Harvey.

"No," said the Colonel. "You know my meaning well. You have done me a great wrong, Harvey Durrant."

"That is your delusion, sir," said Harvey. "I am sorry you still cling to it. Judge and jury have long ago settled that matter of dispute between us."

"There is a Judge who needs no jury to help Him," said the Colonel. "I am now going before Him, and one day, not so far off, since time is but a short passage for us all, you will also stand to hear His sentence. The evidence of witnesses, true or false, or mistaken, will not be required to lead or mislead Him in His decisions. The heart and the mind of a man, the things He made to do His goodwill, are under His eye. No cloud of deception can cover the act or the thought from His supreme understanding. He is His own informer, and will deal with us all according to His knowledge. There are but two ways of fitting ourselves to appear before Him: one is to admit our faults and failures, the other is to forgive the wrongs and hurts done us by the faults and failures of others."

Despite his efforts to keep his ears open chiefly to the stirring of some one in hiding in the room, Harvey found his

attention painfully caught and held by the weak voice, the impressive accents of the dying man. The words he was obliged to listen to were stabbing that conscience within him which was not altogether dead, notwithstanding much poisoning and stiflings. He sat dumb, stricken with the sudden consciousness that the conscience which had been but a phantom in his path had taken a terrible reality as it were of flesh and blood, and was threatening to overcome him on his own ground and with human weapons. The terror of betraying himself through the physical weakness of a coward shook him, and in silence he struggled to recover his nerve and to continue to treat the solemn utterances of the dying man as the ravings of delirium. Still grasping back at the idea that he was in the presence of concealed witnesses, he rose, and steadied himself by the change of position, the bodily movement.

"Have you anything more to say to me?" he asked with a desperate effort to utter something under cover of which he could escape.

"No," said the Colonel, "I have said all I wanted to say. You may go. I pray that you may remember my words before the shadows of death begin to close around you. It may help you then to know that I forgave you."

Harvey left the room like a man in a bad dream, and slunk out of the house without waiting to confront Sir Jonah, who was watching in the library for his return from the sick room.

"Is this rascal not coming down?" he asked Sara when she came, pale and red-eyed, into the library. "Has he died of shame?"

"You mean Harvey?" said Sara.

"Of course I do."

"He is gone, half an hour ago."

"The scoundrel! He was afraid to face me."

"Let him go," said Sara. "Father has said what he wanted to say, and it seems to me the interview has done him good. His heart is at peace. I found him smiling after Harvey had left him. And he has fallen asleep."

“Humph! I have not his easy power of forgiving. The knave must live to be punished.”

“Don’t say anything like that to father,” said Sara. “Don’t disturb him. I heard him murmuring this morning, ‘as we forgive those who trespass against us.’ They are words that apply to us all. I am struggling to accept them.”

Sir Jonah looked abashed. His hard face softened a little.

“If every man had a daughter like you,” he said, “the world might be different to him from what it is. My maxim has been ‘an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth’——”

“A wicked maxim.”

“What is ‘wicked’?” asked the old man fiercely.

“The reverse of good,” said Sara. “You are good, Sir Jonah, a good and faithful friend to my father when others turned against him. What have you to do with wickedness?”

They were at the open door. Sir Jonah put on his hat and went out.

The Colonel slept on. Late in the evening the doctor came and found him still sleeping.

“There is a change,” said the doctor. “I am almost afraid to give you hope, but if this sleep continues he may rally. What has occurred since I saw him early this morning?”

“Nothing, except an interview with a man who had wronged him. He has had a struggle to forgive absolutely, and he has done so. A great peace seemed to come to him and he fell asleep.”

“It is a wonderful instance of the influence of the mind on the body,” said the doctor. “In diseases of the nerves we may expect miracles—if in no other malady.”

“O doctor! don’t give me hope if it is to be crushed again.”

“My dear, I am not a prophet, or a magician; I am only sharing with you the little light that science gives me. You are strong enough to watch the issues of life and death as they hang in the balance. I have seen such a case as this where peace of the spirit acted as a restorative and tonic to the sinking

nervous system. In such an illness a Christian has ten times the chance of the restless man of the world."

Sara sat by her father's side all that night while he slept, and slept, till far into the morning. Watching his unconscious face she prayed for his recovery. As hour after hour went past her heart opened still wider to admit the hope of the doctor that the awaking of the patient might precede his return to life and health. Weeping quietly she sat between hope and fear, thinking over a brave man's years of endurance and patience, his cheerful acceptance of the privation of liberty which was the result of his courage in the battle-field, his contentment with his lot of restraint and incapability, his energy and determination in working on new and extraordinary lines, his long waiting on perfect success, and his great achievement. Then his patience and fortitude under a great wrong, his cheerful effort to live down the ill report that had overtaken him, and now, finally, his grand effort at perfect forgiveness, his child-like yet heroic obedience to the Creator who had commanded such generosity. Truly he was ready to appear at the summons of his Maker. Yet, would his Maker not spare him to her a little longer?

At last he opened his eyes and looked at her sitting there.

"What has happened?" he said. "Have I been long asleep?"

"You have had a fine sleep, and I think it has done you good, darling."

"I think it has. I feel strangely better. But we cannot trust these changes, Sara."

"Oh, I think we can," said Sara joyfully. "The doctor has expected it."

She left him, the nurse taking her place, and went to meet the doctor, whose arrival she had overheard. Behind the doctor, coming up the steps, she saw Arno, who had hastened back from London to see the last of his old friend, and to stand by Sara in her tribulation.

Chapter LI

“A phantom in a man’s way!”

WHEN Durrant turned from the door in Donegall Place he was not in a mood to return to Bleachgreens. He hid himself in a little-frequented restaurant and ordered lunch, but sat before the food with no appetite for anything but drink, the only thing capable of lifting him a bit out of the slough in which he found himself. Having early yielded to temptation the dreariness of life had of late driven him to seek oblivion where so many find perdition. He drank now as he sat staring at the wall of a dingy room, with the Colonel’s words ringing in his ears, even through the cloud that was settling on his dulled senses. His nerves began to throb less acutely, but his mind was clear as to the meanings of the scene through which he had just passed. Slowly and stupidly, but accurately enough, he reviewed his position, summoning that imaginary witness from behind the bed-curtain to report the interview between him and the dying man. The Colonel’s words were terrible to him, Harvey, to hear; but how would they sound, after all, to a third person who had no actual knowledge of the truth? Were they of more weight than former statements made through the Colonel’s lawyer? Would they not pass as the utterance of one dying possessed by a monomania? And he, Harvey, had not compromised himself by a single admission, in response. Yet with all this reassurance, the appalling weight on his conscience, a conscience like a living thing that, though drugged and stifled, would not die, pressed

on him intolerably, making him dread to walk out into the daylight and meet the eyes of those who believed in him.

It was evening before he shook himself up and faced the streets, and took the train to Bleachgreens.

His home was but half a mile from the mills, on the other side of the river, and he lingered as he walked, dreading to meet Herminia, whose keen eyes would detect the consequences of those hours with the decanter in the restaurant. He was sober enough to note the imposing appearance of his house, which never looked finer than as now, with the lights in the windows shining from among the boughs of great old trees, and sending up wreaths of smoke from its bristling chimneys. The lights shone most brightly from Herminia's room, and he could see a tall figure in white standing before a mirror, while a maid moved to and fro about the chamber. He remembered that his wife was going to a ball that night, and that he was expected to accompany her.

On entering the house he was summoned at once to her presence.

"I have dined without you," she said, "and you had better take something in haste. We have a long way to drive."

"I'm not inclined to go," said Harvey, avoiding the light. "In fact, I have something to do. You will get on far better without me."

"Perhaps I shall," she said, looking at him keenly. "I see you have been making a fool of yourself again."

"I tell you I have something to do at the office," said Harvey sullenly. "I shall get it done, and sleep in my rooms there. Go and enjoy yourself, and don't trouble further about me."

"You have been drinking," said Herminia, fastening a bracelet on her wrist.

"Your imagination is not a complimentary one," said Harvey.

Herminia smiled disdainfully, and gathered up her plumed fan and the lace flounces of her satin train. She was a hand-

some creature, but his dull eyes no longer found pleasure in her beauty. Few men will not agree with Shakespeare that “beauty dwells with kindness.” And he had not found Herminia kind.

“By the way,” she said, turning at the top of the stair, “did you see the old gentleman, and what did he say to you?”

“That will do after the ball,” he said. “It is too long a story.”

“You forgave him, I suppose,” she said, with a slight sneer.

“It was a painful interview,” he answered; “not the kind of thing it would interest you to hear about. Don’t keep the horses waiting. Good-night.”

Herminia laughed lightly, said “ta-ta,” and went down the stairs to the carriage.

Harvey watched the smart equipage roll away through the gates, said a few words to the servant in the hall, and took the road back to the mills.

He was not inclined to go at once to his apartment in the offices, not in haste to sit again in a room alone, staring at the wall, and reviewing the acts of his life which had laid the foundations of this superstructure of misery which was now rising around him like prison walls, and threatening to shut out the light of heaven from his future.

He walked up one avenue and down another of the mill settlement, round the paths that wound by the yarn-walk, past the beetling house and the carpenter’s shed, away towards the level bleach-greens, where the long strips of the whitening linen lay like prostrate ghosts, motionless in the grey star-light. Up yonder on the hill, away to the left, the sheep were browsing in the folds and on the downs where Arno used to sketch. Arno! Yes, the first positive wrong he did was done to Arno. How could any boy act so nobly as Arno had done at that time? Nobly? Nonsense. It was weakness of character, and boyish affection for him, Harvey, that had held the fellow’s tongue. And yet Arno, as he was told, had established a fine reputation for himself elsewhere, while he—

well, what would have happened had he taken pattern by Arno and assumed honesty to be the best policy, as the proverb has declared it? Could any *cul de sac* of failure be more constraining of liberty than this narrow chamber of prosperity, this ghastly castle of success into which he had bricked himself?

He pulled himself up, and stood staring at the waters of the mill-race as they went footing slowly between the broad walk and the grasses that hung over the dangerous brink on the thither side. The stars rocked and swung on the deep smooth waves. Harvey's head began to reel as he watched them. He had no desire for suicide, though the thought came to him that many a man so miserable as he was would have taken a header into the dark waters, scattering for a moment those rocking stars that would continue their glittering dance as soon as he had reached the bottom.

He turned aside disgusted, and as the dawn began to break over the hill he set his face that way and climbed slowly the easy ascent to the huge thorn tree near the highest point. Round the tree a rustic seat had been made, and here the little shepherd boy of to-day would sit and whistle on his tin pipe as joyously as any votary of Pan in classic legend. Here the children of the workers in the mills, whose cottages lined the inner yards of the factory establishment, and stood in groups here and there beside the waters on the avenues of approach, would come to gather primroses and wild anemones in their tin porringers and birthday mugs, inscribed "for a good child," or in the clean bibs which were whiter than town-bibs because of the neighbourhood of the bleachgreens. It was a rare spot for wild flowers, the soil enriched by its use as pasturage, and even now, for it was spring, the primroses with the thickly clustering blooms, long of stem and broad and yellow of disc, stood in pale-gold bosses at the feet of the man who was all out of touch with the sweetness of nature, while he breathed the delicate fragrance that filled his nostrils, wafted on the airs of the dawn.

. . . “Daffodils,
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty; violets dim,
But sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eyes
Or Cytherea’s breath.” . . .

Round the hoary bole of the aged tree, away in the green hollows under the hedges that still reserved in stealth the silver treasure of hawthorn-blossoms, down yonder, nodding like faery queens, slender as a withe, scarce able to bear the crowns they wore, were the flowers that had delighted the soul of Arno while his pencil wrought, but were nothing to Durrant save a silly and meaningless expression of the earth’s mechanical jubilation at a certain time of year.

“A primrose by a river’s brim
A yellow primrose was to him.”

Now he could see, as the night-clouds skurried off, the whole panorama of the low-lying country, the mill settlement in its hollow of green, the stately river moving towards the arches of the great bridge that carried the high road to the village, the kilns with their ever-ascending smoke, the lesser streams of the mill-races, looking insignificant, for all their importance, by the side of their stately mother, the river. The huge factory chimney rose on one side out of its surrounding blocks of building, looking somewhat like a round tower of mysterious eld. Flocks of pigeons began to circle in the air around it, cocks crowed faintly from distant farmyards, and a chorus of song came from the blackbirds and thrushes nested in the trees above his head.

He turned from the direction in which Herminia’s home lay, the fine home bought with a great price, and looked away across the river to Bleachgreens. There, it seemed to him, lay the broken possibilities of a better life which he had thrown away. There were other lines than those on which he had walked, if he could but have chosen them. He had not seen them clearly. He had followed his own lights. He saw himself an adventurous youth thrown on the world at the death of

improvident parents, trying to establish a claim with the wealthy Sir Jonah, who had, in his own rude way, given the handsome, attractive youth a lift by introducing him to Robert Montgomery. The years that followed, looking back on them, were all a primrose path. How easily he had become a favourite with his employer and his family. The girls welcomed him eagerly, the boys looked on him, the young elder, who charmed everybody and enjoyed their father's confidence, as a hero. True, they all believed him to be Sir Jonah's probable heir, but then he believed the same himself, and in that he had not deceived them.

Sir Jonah. Yes, his grudging attitude towards the youth he had encouraged, his cynical pleasure in outwitting the wits that had planned to ensnare his sympathies, who had led him on and cast him off, Sir Jonah was the living and exulting fiend who was the cause of his ruin. Had he made him his heir, mated him with Sara, cleared the way in which he might walk honestly and fearlessly side by side with Robert as partner in Montgomery's mills, these hated temptations by which he had fallen could never have assailed him.

So he argued till the sun set the river afire, and with the new day the audacity which with Harvey stood for courage returned ; regrets ceased, and he reviewed his present position with renewed assurance.

Probably by this time the Colonel was dead. No use crying now over spilt milk. He had taken his secret with him, and there might have been no hidden witness of that interview after all. Whatever his sins and blunders in the past, that chapter was closed. The law was in his favour, and the invention with its emoluments was his own. For the rest, no man had a right to say that because he had made one discovery in the world of machinery he must make more. If Herminia would cease to worry him and be a little less extravagant, things might yet be well. What was conscience, after all, but a phantom in a man's way ?

He rose up, returned to his rooms, bathed, breakfasted, and took his place as usual at his desk in the office.

Chapter LII

“Only a bit of a hitch !”

ROBERT came into the office and signed to Harvey to accompany him into his private room, but was called away immediately on a matter of business.

There was an interval of a few minutes before he returned, during which Harvey waited for him, alone. It was the room from which the bag of sovereigns had been abstracted, where, first Arno, and afterwards Sara, had been accused or suspected, and when both had been expelled.

A good deal can be remembered and thought of in five minutes amid suggestive surroundings, and Durrant looked about him uneasily, then walked to the window, and saw the men in the yard loading the carts with the square blocks of the knotted hanks of yarn. A memory was there too, a serpent coiled in every one of those knotted hanks. So had he stood for a moment on the day of the theft, looking out on the loading of the carts. But the serpents were safely coiled and concealed. Not one of them could spring.

“You obeyed that call—you paid that visit. How did you find the Colonel?” asked Robert, entering the office.

“Sinking,” said Harvey. “About at the last, I should say.”

“You set his mind at rest, I hope,” said Robert. “I always felt there was some mistake on his part. Did he ask your forgiveness?”

“Not exactly,” said Harvey. “But I would rather not

talk about the interview. It was painful enough. I don't feel the better of it."

"You look rather shaken," said Robert; "but it was an act of charity, which you ought not to regret. Has there been any news this morning?"

"I have not heard any. But probably all is over by this time."

The door opened and Sir Jonah came into the office. He took no notice of Durrant, who started on seeing him, and involuntarily withdrew from the full light of the window. Sir Jonah addressed himself to Robert.

"I came out at once to tell you that Stevenson has had a change for the better. The doctor thinks he has turned a corner, and there is now hope that he will get over the attack."

"I am truly glad," said Robert. "Perhaps the interview with Harvey eased his mind. I have suspected that worry over the painful thing that happened, occasioned I dare say by mistakes and blunders, may have brought on the illness. And now that Harvey has forgiven him——"

Sir Jonah fixed his deep-set eyes on Robert and smiled grimly. Then he turned to Harvey, but before he could speak again a door opened hastily and a workman appeared.

"Mr. Durrant is wanted in the mill," he said hurriedly. "There is a break-down in his part of the machinery. The wheel of the new engine has stopped, and the smith says he wants to see the inventor."

Robert made an exclamation. Harvey's face, already white from his uneasy vigil, took a ghastly pallor.

"Go, Harvey, I will follow," said Robert, forgetting the Colonel in this new trouble. "You will excuse us, Sir Jonah. This may be a difficult business."

"Hardly," said Sir Jonah, "considering that you have the master-workman on the premises to see to his work."

Robert was too much pre-occupied to notice the sneer, and too long accustomed to Sir Jonah's airs of cynicism to heed it

greatly had he observed it. He was only anxious to dismiss his visitor without rudeness, and to follow Durrant to the scene of misfortune.

“Don’t mind me,” said Sir Jonah. “If you will allow me, I will go with you to the mill. I shall be interested in seeing this clever piece of machinery about which one has heard so much. And it will be doubly interesting to see the inventor at his task of putting the creation of his ingenuity to rights again.”

Half of this speech was made to Robert’s back as he followed him through passages before emerging with him into the yard.

There Montgomery turned to him, saying :

“I warn you that you had better keep out of the mill. The place where I am going is an ugly place for those unaccustomed to it. The wheels make one dizzy, and the belts are dangerous.”

“Humph!” said Sir Jonah. “Then I’ll stay where I am till you come back,” and Robert hurried off.

Meanwhile Durrant had followed the messenger blindly, stupefied with a heavy consciousness that vengeance was overtaking him from an unexpected quarter. He was well aware that there were points concerned with the working of an intricate piece of machinery which he did not thoroughly understand. The smith, an intelligent worker in metals, far beyond himself in knowledge of such matters, would question him in a way that would reveal his ignorance. The thing was so sudden that there was no time to resort to cunning in making up a subject. This was a crisis which he had never foreseen, and to-day his brain was in so confused a state that he felt he had no power of dealing plausibly with the difficulty sprung on him. As he followed the hasty steps of the smith through noisy mill-rooms, reeking with moisture, smelling of soaked yarn, dusty with the dust of tow-shreds in the air, dazing to the brain with whizzing wheels and whirring belts, to touch which would mean death or mutilation, stepping on wet

slippery boards above a range of demon-like engines which seemed panting to grind the bones of the unwary, he realized the necessity of bringing a cool head, well-balanced limbs, and steadily-poised feet to the safe pursuit of a man's way through all these bewildering snares and pitfalls. He felt that he was not at this moment fit to go where he was going, that it was the day of all others when he would fain have been spared such a dangerous bit of steering. At the back of all the confusion in his brain was Sir Jonah's announcement that Stevenson was not gone beyond all earthly power of telling tales and bearing witness, but likely to live, and perhaps yet conquer. The prevision of a new trial with the smith of the works, and perhaps the engineer of the machinery, who would presently come on the scene to give evidence of the ignorance which he, Harvey, was fated to display as to the intricacies of his own supposed invention, rushed upon him, and with the hurry of his nerves and stress on his heart his sight became blurred and his feet more unsteady.

"Now, sir," said the smith, who was waiting for him, "you will see better than anyone what has happened."

"Will it not work?" asked Harvey.

They were standing beside a motionless monster of steel and iron.

"I'm about to give it another trial. Stand back, sir."

The smith made the effort to set the monster going, and to his surprise the thing sprang into sudden activity, some accidental hitch having been removed, no real injury having existed. The suddenness of the shock made Harvey's head reel, and he threw out an arm to steady himself.

"My God, sir!"

The cry was from the workman. Harvey's right arm was caught in a merciless belt and wrenched from the shoulder.

Robert, following on Durrant's footsteps to the consultation over the machine that had failed, heard the cries and shouts that rang from the room ahead of him, and hurried to the spot.

Harvey had fallen unconscious into the arms of an attendant workman, and was bleeding horribly.

“The thing’s a devil!” said the smith. “It has murdered him that made it!”

With great difficulty the men, accustomed to walk on narrow planks between danger and danger, carried the injured man through such passages and down such dizzy stairways as few can imagine who have never been admitted to the inner recesses where dwell the motor-powers of a great factory.

He was laid on a mattress on the floor of the lowest room in the office quarters, and efforts were made to staunch the bleeding. Telegraphic messages summoned the best surgeons from Belfast, while the local doctor gave all the aid for the moment possible under the circumstances.

An operation was performed before noon, and the surgeons gave their opinion that life might be saved if blood-poison could be averted.

By sundown Harvey was lying in the darkened room at the mill, and the works were stopped, so that no noise might disturb the patient and prevent or retard his recovery.

The terrible accident gave a shock to the whole factory settlement.

“There’s been nothing like it since poor M’Lavery was spun round in the belts, body and bones!” said a foreman. “But this thing was to have been the saving of a lot of danger and trouble.”

“And so it was,” said the smith. “And nothing was wrong with it after all. Only a bit of a hitch. It’s the hand of God of course. But why did it fall on the man that had been trying to do good with it?”

“There’s many’s the why,” said the other, “but neither you nor me has got the answerin’ of the questions that some people have the impudence to be asking the Almighty.”

Robert Montgomery suffered acute distress at the catastrophe, and the whole family was plunged in grief. All Harvey’s faults and failings, which of late years had almost

blotted out his original charm, were forgotten, and his personality as it had been known to them before the marriage with Herminia had seemed to change everything, was now present to them with all its winningness.

Harvey was, however, altogether in the hands of doctors and nurses, and the attentions of the family were absorbed by Herminia, whose hysterical state was the chief cause of concern to her mother, the rest of the family standing back in awe, admitting that all their sorrow was as nothing compared with what the wife had to suffer.

Jane was faithful to her post as sympathizer with her favourite child, some of whose lamentations were a surprise even to her, who understood her daughter better than any other, having brought her up so carefully in the way she should go.

"And there is another ball to-night!" sobbed Herminia between the rappings of the heels of her pretty French shoes on the floor.

Jane felt some awe of the words and said nothing.

"How long will it be before I can show myself again?" asked Herminia.

"However it may end," said Jane, "you cannot be seen in society for many a day."

"Cruel, cruel!" sobbed Herminia. "Have you no mercy on me? My life cut down in its prime! What is to become of that lovely dress that has just come home? You can see it spread out on the bed. At this very hour I should have worn it——"

Even Jane's not too tender heart was chilled. Harvey's suffering did not seem to appeal to Herminia at all. The cessation of her own amusements and of the display of her beauty to her little world of admirers appeared to be the cause of her affliction.

Jane, looking at the miserable creature who, to a casual observer, would have been a wife stricken by the misfortune that had befallen her husband, thought for a moment of how it might have been with herself had Robert been in Harvey's

condition. And, callous as she had many a time been to the sufferings of those whose lives did not interest her, she shrank from the shallow selfish soul laid bare before her.

But it was only for a moment. The old habit of excusing and petting the favourite child, with whose nature her own had so much in common, came to her relief. Harvey might live or die, but it would have been too terrible to her mother to have to condemn Herminia.

Chapter LIH

A Confession

AFTER a spell of unconsciousness mercifully prolonged by anaesthetics, Harvey regained possession of his senses, and was aware of great bodily suffering, and of the loss of his arm. Very gradually memory returned to him, reproducing the scenes and events of the last few days. A terrible realization of his present state followed. His life was in danger. The constant attention of his doctors, the serious faces of his nurses assured him of it. Death? He had never thought of it for himself, except as a far-off ending of a life that had only begun. And now it was at hand and he was hurrying to meet it. It was awful and horrible, and his mind was not made up to the inevitable. What was it that some one had been saying to him about death quite lately? It was not a falling asleep as some would have it, but a dread going forth to explore the unknown. Oh yes, the Colonel!

It was not the Colonel who was so going forth, but himself, Harvey Durrant. He was now to meet the Judge who needs no jury to help Him, no sworn witnesses of thoughts, acts, and deeds, all known to Him and to Him alone. Was there no escape on any side? This was all too sudden. He was not ready for such reckonings. The Colonel had forgiven him, warning him of a day far off, a day that seemed centuries distant, but had already reached its noon. What was the fatality that was bringing this death upon him? Straining his ears while he appeared unconscious, he heard the nurses

whisper of blood-poisoning. If that should ensue, death was inevitable.

Two or three days passed, in agony of mind and body, and then Harvey learned from the doctor's lips that the worst symptoms had set in, and that it were well to arrange such of his affairs as might not already be in order.

"Let me see Robert Montgomery," he gasped.

Robert came to him. "My poor fellow," he said, "what can I do for you?"

"Nothing," moaned Harvey, "but to help me to cast a burthen off my conscience."

Robert started. Harvey was staring at him with eyes full of fear.

"We have all our faults," he said, "but God knows our weakness better than we know it ourselves. And He is great in His mercy."

"Ah, but there is a lie, and I cannot die with it strangling my soul: for I have a soul, though I scarcely believed it until now. Stevenson has forgiven me, but——"

"Stevenson!"

"Yes, yes. It is true that I stole the invention."

Robert controlled the cry of indignation that rose to his lips. This was a dying man, and reproach was not for the penitent sinner.

"Let me hear all," he said pitifully.

"I was tempted, and I fell. I never in my life could stand against a violent temptation. He trusted me with his secret. I thought little about it at first, then I became interested; but I never thought to cheat him till Sir Jonah failed me——"

"Go on." Robert spoke almost in a whisper.

"Sir Jonah encouraged me to think myself his heir. He amused himself playing with my worst failings. He would make me his heir if I had married Sara, but Sara had other ideas. Arno's dreams and fancies pleased her. I was cast off. Herminia was kind at that time, but you would have none of me. I bought your goodwill at a great price. I had learned

Stevenson's invention by heart ; he was ailing, he might never have lived to patent it. I saw that I could copy his drawings, his models, and be beforehand with him, so slow was he. I yielded to the temptation, and I was successful. Stay, there was a flaw. He delayed, he waited to perfect the thing, and that was my opportunity. But the hitch that was possible is the thing that has risen up and killed me."

He stopped, overcome with passion and weakness—the passion of fear, the weakness of failing life.

"Have courage," said Robert. "You have confessed. You will be forgiven."

"I have not confessed all. This was not the first time I had wronged another. I got Arno into trouble by setting fire to my papers when in a tipsy slumber. He saved my life and the mills, and I allowed him to bear the blame that was mine."

Again Robert started and winced, but did not speak.

"I took the purse of sovereigns off your desk. Arno and Sara suffered for my sin."

"Impossible! You were not there."

"Ah, but I was there. I was with the clerks at the window looking at the men loading the carts with the yarn in the yard. I knew the money was there. I heard Arno and Sara run up to Arno's room. I had slipped into your office and returned with the bag of sovereigns in my pocket before the clerks turned their heads or the others returned, and I was gone to town in a minute afterwards."

"Unhappy fellow!" groaned Robert. "Why could you not have trusted your friends?"

"I was in debt. I had squandered on betting. I could not confess my faults. I wanted to pursue my own ways, yet keep my good reputation. And there again Sir Jonah was my evil genius. He refused to give or lend me the money that would have saved me."

"He had been generous," said Robert.

"Not generous. He took me up. I was his fad. He had

some responsibility, for he had a cynical eye to my faults. He did not trust me wholly as you did. He did not love me as Arno did. My sins are against Stevenson, and Arno, and you, but not against Sir Jonah Cunnygham. He would laugh at me now if he were here—you do not laugh."

"It is all too sad for laughter," said Robert, "but you must try to calm your mind. You must forgive Sir Jonah if you believe he injured you—even as Stevenson has forgiven you. You are doing your best to make amends, and you are going before a forgiving God. I can answer for the forgiveness of Sara and Arno. Would you wish to see them?"

Harvey shuddered. "No," he said, "I would rather see no one more. I leave my dying confession in your hands. You will see that justice is done when I am gone——"

"Will you not see Herminia?"

"It would only worry her. Herminia never loved me. She just took me at the price of my worldly value. She will soon forget me."

Robert was stung by the bitter words of which he could not deny the truth.

He remembered in time the necessity for getting Harvey's dying statement on paper, and properly witnessed, and that having been done he made an effort to persuade Herminia to see her husband and speak some comforting words to him. But Harvey had been right in his estimate of his wife's feeling towards him. She refused to go through such a painful experience.

"What would be the use of it?" she asked. "If he is to die I can't prevent it. I can do him no good and only make myself more miserable. I hear he is a dreadful wreck. And Harvey was so handsome. Whatever else he may have been, he was handsome."

Robert turned from her disheartened and disgusted, but Jane defended her from his reproach.

"It is natural that she should prefer to think of him as he was before this horror happened," she said.

And Robert turned from her, too, thinking that if he were in Harvey's condition Jane would desert him. This was not true, but it was one of the conclusions come to on apparently sufficient evidences that stand for ever as the truth, unless some unlikely accident should occur at a future time to overturn them.

So while Herminia hid herself and bewailed her evil fortune, Harvey lay in the shadows of his death-chamber, in silence strange and unusual, a Sabbath stillness, the mill-works all stopped, no rumble of the beetling engines, no cheery clatter of the bells calling to work, calling to leave off work, calling to meals and back from meals again, the busy sounds of every day hushed in a pause of awe at the approach of a dreadful visitor. For, overwhelmed as he was with remorse and regret, Durrant found it hard to look on death as the angel coming to take him once for all out of the paths of wrong-doing. He found it hard to quit life at so sudden a summons. He would fain, in his penitence, have been permitted to begin life over again, with a better chance of success on honest lines, instead of being hurried away as a failure.

But the call was imperative. Time was up, and he must go.

Mark took Robert's place at his bedside, and talked to him soothingly, spoke to him of hope beyond this darkness. His sudden doom, his suffering, his remorse made him an object of pity to the friends around him, who for the moment obliged themselves to forget how he had deceived them.

As day followed day he lingered longer than the doctors had expected, and gradually his bitterness in the consideration of his own cruel fate was softened, and he accepted death as the best remedy for the inherent moral disease that had made his difficulties.

"If I had lived I never could have brought myself to confess; and as I never was all bad, I should have grown more and more miserable."

"Try to be happy now," said Mark. "God will blot out all those blunders. None of us are perfect; but He who made us

can perfect us. In another life we shall be ourselves, but yet other than our weaknesses make us here."

"I said to your father that I would not see Arno and Sara," said Harvey. "I feel differently now. Herminia would not come. It has all been very hard for her, poor girl, and I do not blame her. But Arno and Sara will come. The Colonel is better, and he will spare them."

Mark went to them with the dying man's message, and they who were so happy were eager to gratify the last wish of the sufferer. The Colonel, surprised at his own unexpected recovery, and shocked at the punishment that had fallen on Harvey, was also anxious that they should give him what consolation was possible.

So Sara and Arno set out for Bleachgreens together, restraining their own joy in each other's companionship, and in the many blessings that were theirs for awe of the suffering and sorrow they were to witness. It was long since either had seen the place where they had known so many happy hours in childhood, and the day when each in turn had gone forth from it under a cloud was vividly present to their minds.

Harvey was sinking fast when they stood beside his bed.

"Sara! Arno!" he said, "I wronged you, and yet I loved you both, in my own selfish, unworthy way. I beg your forgiveness. Sara, I do not wonder now that you turned from me. Arno, your affection and your example ought to have made me a better man. Say, both of you, that you pardon me."

Tears were on their faces as they assured him of their forgiveness and their sorrow for his suffering, and he seemed to gain comfort and peace.

The nurse having warned them away, they walked up to the hill and sat on the rustic seat where Harvey had sat in the dawn when he made up his mind that conscience was only a phantom to scare men out of their sober senses. They knew nothing of that, while they looked round on the familiar homely happy scene, so brimful of sweet associations. There were the sheep in the hollow, the very flock, as it seemed, that

Arno had sketched ; over yonder was the farm of the pigeons and bee-hives to which many excursions had been made. They felt that the lines of their lives would carry them far from Bleachgreens, and they gazed long on the broad, slowly-footing river ; on the narrow, headlong mill-race ; on the avenues, the workers' cots, the yarn-walks, the great old trees, the dark arch of the town bridge receiving the sun-dazzled waters, the clusters of buildings lying below green, white-striped levels and flowering hedges.

It was all sweet and good, busy and beneficent. The cloud that hung over it now would be lifted by and by, and all would go on happily again as though Harvey Durrant had never been.

But Arno and Sara felt that their share in it was over.

Chapter LIV

“His Failure gave him his Soul”

WHEN all that remained of Harvey Durrant visible to the eye of this world had been hidden in the neighbouring God's Acre, life at Bleachgreens took up its theme once more, and retold of labour and the reward of labour, in a new chapter of Time's unending serial. The bells rang out again, the wheels turned and floundered in the deep waters dammed for their uses, the “beetles” groaned and grumbled, the saw shrieked in the carpenter's workshop, girls stood in rows on the yarn-walk, pulling the yarn. Quick hands spread the long linens on the smooth greens between the lines of towering elms and the busy waters. Cocks and hens pecked the loose grains round the open door of the little corn-mill and kiln at the head of the main avenue. The sheep lay in the hollow under the great hill, and the cows browsed along its sides, seeking for the cowslips that make the butter sweet. The wild roses were red and white in the high hedges on the road through the white gates leading to the open country, and Spring, now walking freely abroad, was scattering her primroses, her violets, her anemones and her wild daffodils under blue skies, with rain on her hair, and in her eyes the sunshine of laughter. Within the mills, the wheels whirled and the belts whizzed above them, and wary feet and hands moved among them daily, daring death for the wage that feeds the children. All was the same in this citadel of manufacture, held with strain in its sweet rural surroundings, the burning heart of trade throbbing to fill

the veins of the world, to build up and strengthen the brains and the sinews that open the upward paths of Art, and lure the spirit of Poetry from her all but inaccessible fastnesses. All was exactly the same as though Harvey Durrant had never lived and died, had never put his hand to this big world's work, or suffered through the act of that erring hand.

It was a bitter day of Robert Montgomery's life when he set out on a painful errand to his old friend, Colonel Stevenson, taking Harvey's confession to place before him. The Colonel, though very weak, was convalescent, and having heard from Sara and Arno of all the recent events at Bleachgreens, he was prepared for the interview.

He was sitting up in bed propped with pillows when Robert came in with lowered head, looking worn and aged.

"Am I wrong to come so soon? I have much to say to you. Can you bear it?" he asked.

"Dear old friend," said the Colonel, holding out both his thin hands, "don't look so concerned about me. Nothing that happened has done me harm. It is for you I am troubled now."

There was a silence, when neither could speak. Then Robert sat down and tried to tell the story of Harvey's suffering and repentance.

"It is all over now," said the Colonel, "both the wrong and the suffering. I am here, my life has been restored to me, with many blessings. He, in his youth, has been cut down. The punishment makes one forget the sin, so sad is it. And all this falls most heavily now on you. Your poor daughter, Herminia——"

Robert winced.

"She must learn to bear her share of the trouble," said Robert. "Fortunately, perhaps, for herself, she is not so keenly sensitive as some women would be under the circumstances. She is in great distress now, but she will recover her spirits in time."

Something in Robert's face as he spoke of Herminia caused

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the Colonel's eyes to fall. He felt that he had touched on a fresh subject of bitterness. To make a diversion he went back to the matter of the invention.

“It is an odd thing,” he said, “that poor Harvey fell a victim to his ignorance of the intricacies of the piece of machinery which he was supposed to have originated. It was the possibility of the occurrence of that very hitch that gave me pause after I first believed it was complete. I saw there was a flaw, and I told Harvey I had made up my mind to wait for an inspiration to enable me to perfect the whole. He was too light-minded to apprehend the point, and at that moment I do not believe he thought of appropriating the invention. But after that he began to urge me to hold back with a view to still further lights. I was of the same mind myself, from motives of prudence, and full awareness of the dangers that might arise from the slightest imperfection in the patented work. Then my illness in the Glens that year played into the hands of his evil genius——”

There was silence again between the two men. Neither liked to say “it was a visitation of Providence, a punishment directly proceeding from the sin as its consequence.” So little do we know of God's ways of dealing with the soul of the wrong-doer.

“I see,” said Robert slowly, having thought over the Colonel's last words for the space of a minute, “Harvey hastened to patent the invention while it was yet in its incomplete state. And you hold it now, as it is, perfected, as yet unworked, but ready?”

“That is so,” said the Colonel. “It will make a new patent the more easy to obtain. So you need not be concerned about me.”

“You must be righted as to the past,” said Robert, “and the money of which you have been robbed must be restored.”

“No,” said the Colonel, “we must think of Herminia.”

“She will be cared for,” said Robert, thinking bitterly of the wealth she had already squandered. “Too much money would

only be a curse to one of Herminia's tastes and fancied requirements."

Again, the Colonel felt that there was another sorrow for Robert, even under all that appeared; and he said:

"She is young, and we have been told by the wise that early tribulation is a great educator. But, my friend, apart from all this trial, you have many blessings. Your other children are a comfort to you. Mark is a noble fellow. Even while forbearing to suspect Harvey he was true to us."

"Mark is the man I look to, to carry on my work and stand in my place when I am gone," said Montgomery, the cloud on his face lifting a little.

"And a great work it is!" said the Colonel.

"I don't know. I am not so sure, not so arrogant in my assurance as I used to be. I thought trade, manufacture, commerce the finest factor in the onward movement of the world."

"So it is. One of the finest," said the Colonel emphatically.

"Yet, see how it swallows money, and craves for more! How it impels those who deal with it to sordid views."

"It never so impelled you."

"Not personally, I think, I hope. But we have seen an instance. A large trade demands capital, and the capitalist knowing it, feels himself licensed in grasping money where he can get it. If conscience should grow weak under the strain, and strong temptation come in the way, principle is lost and only greed is allowed to flourish. Even when one is trying to walk straight one's conduct is ruled by the exacting conditions of the responsibilities one has incurred. I could not have accepted Harvey as my son-in-law and partner without substantial support to the works from that quarter. We have seen the result to him——"

"But I believe, do you not agree with me, that Harvey, under any circumstances, with any conditions, would have failed? It was in his nature. He was not strong enough in his errors to become successfully wicked. There are some

saved as by fire, and his failure gave him his soul. He said himself, poor fellow, ‘I was not all bad.’ In other hands than yours he might have grown all bad.”

“He blamed Sir Jonah Cunnygham, and I think the old man had some responsibility which he refused to recognize. He ought to have either let Harvey alone, or have been generous enough to do a little more for him.”

“Maybe so. But I think Harvey would have been Harvey, place him anywhere or anyhow in life. A weak will, a nature loving luxury and amusement, a vanity flattered by admiration of his personal attractions, these wrought together for his downfall. The downfall was needed to strengthen and purify him. God wanted the good in him to conquer, and it has conquered. The mortal part of him has been left behind, the immortal has gone forth rectified. Try to feel that we had all a part, as the instruments of Providence, in His work of saving as by fire the creature we once loved, and now forgive and have sorrowed for.”

“I follow your thought, and it comforts me,” said Robert. “But to go back to this depressing idea of trade which has been haunting me since Harvey’s fall has been known to me. How much more free are you, with your own peculiar trials which you have borne so bravely. With comparatively little money you have done so many noble things. You have invented a machine which does immense good to the more suffering classes engaged in our trade, a thing which we were not able to do ourselves. You accept as your son-in-law Arno, the lad whom I rebuked and almost persecuted for his persistence in following the career to which he has evidently been called. In my worship of manufacture and commerce I despised art as a mere plaything for men who were neither earnest nor serious. I was ready to believe that the disciple of art must go down before the apostle of trade. Where a lie lay between them I had no hesitation in deciding that truth must be with the man of looms and ledgers rather than with the dreamer of dreams. You were able to see more clearly,

and you saved Arno by your faith in him, both as to his honesty and his genius. To me he was a wilful boy, bent on a disastrous course, scraping pencils and seeing visions when his mind ought to have been absorbed in watching the turning of my mill wheels. I thought I had been good in giving him a chance to work out of the slough into which his father sank."

"So you were!" said the Colonel stoutly.

"I had not your wits to see that he was of a different mettle from his father. But I saw it when I stood before his picture in the gallery in London. 'I have been blind, blind, blind!' I said, 'but, thank God, George Stevenson has had eyes to see!'"

"Now, Robert Montgomery," said the Colonel, "you are over-strained, and you are doing both yourself and me injustice. You and I have both meant well, according to our lights, and have been playing the part that was given us to play. You did, as you acknowledge, give Arno a chance, and with excellent result, for in your service he got a certain discipline which was invaluable to one of his temperament. But then, if you had kept him there instead of letting him go his adventurous way you would have injured him through his affection for you, and his sense of gratitude, which was strong in him. He would have been a square man in a round hole all his life, I tell you. So there again you must leave the bending of your goodwill to Providence."

Robert went away, his mind occupied with considering how best he could make restitution to the Stevensons of the money they had been deprived of by Harvey's dishonesty, and which had been squandered by Herminia's extravagance. The Colonel had, at parting, repeated his declaration that he would not allow any such restitution, that the past should be all truly past, and that after a time a new patent in his name would make everything right. But Robert was still resolved that justice should be done, and he spoke to his wife, and Mark, and Herminia on the subject.

Herminia became violently angry, and asserted that the

invention was hers, past and future, as the only property her husband had had to leave her. It was in vain that Robert represented the true state of the case to her, and assured her that the invention had never been Harvey's property or hers, and that the money from it which she had spent had been ill-gotten. She affected to believe that Harvey's supposed confession was a false statement.

“He was not in his right mind,” she said, “his brain was affected. Are you going to make me a beggar?”

“You shall come back to your father's house, Herminia, to your old home. In time you will forget that these terrible things have happened. I will take care that your wants are provided for, and you will be happy again, my poor daughter.”

Home again! Back to her father's house, with no position, no independence of her own? “No, no!” cried Herminia, and fell into hysterics.

“Leave her to me,” said Jane. “Why did you speak on this subject so soon? No wonder the poor child is distracted.”

Robert sighed. He had hoped that his family would be as anxious as he was himself to see justice done. And, as it proved, all but Herminia were right-minded on the subject. Herminia was not, and never had been, like the others.

She refused to be comforted, and as time went on the family were made so unhappy by her presence among them as to wish earnestly that her demand for a separate maintenance, an income of her own which would allow her to go about the world, enjoying herself in her own fashion, could be granted, even at the cost of injustice to themselves. The burning question was finally set at rest through the generosity of the Colonel, who arranged that the income of the capital which Robert, as determined as himself, insisted on returning to him, should be settled on Herminia during her lifetime. This, Robert was quite unable to prevent, though he did not approve of it.

"It is monstrous," he said, "seeing that you have a daughter of your own."

"Sara will have enough," said the Colonel; "she makes her happiness out of materials that do not require an extravagant expenditure of money, and, with the invention now in my hands, the future is, I think, sufficiently provided for."

Herminia, thus dowered, was restored to good humour, but took the provision as her just due, and discounted the necessity for gratitude to the Colonel. As a well-provided widow she began to look about for the best means of amusing herself, and perceived the advantages of leaving the scenes of her earlier life behind her.

Before the year was over she had flitted to Paris, and taken up her residence with a friend who was also a widow, as light-minded if not so handsome as herself. Here she led the gay life that suited her, and eventually married an American millionaire. She felt herself thus compensated for all the misery through which she had been dragged by Harvey. This time she had made sure that the riches of her husband were not illusory, and as wealth was regarded by her as the foundation of all happiness, we may suppose that she was happy, so long as youth and health could be made to endure. And further than this we need not follow the fortunes of Herminia.

After the complete withdrawal of her eldest daughter from the family circle Jane became an altered woman. Never very warm-hearted, the depravity of Harvey, and the cold selfishness of the daughter who had been her idol, chilled her so terribly that she was obliged to draw nearer to warmer natures in self-defence. She grew milder and kinder to her husband, more tender to her good sons, sweeter to her younger daughters, who, she acknowledged unwillingly, were fortunate in the removal of Herminia. And Robert, feeling this chastening change in his wife, was drawn towards her with increase of sympathy, wondering to see how good will come out of evil, and how the opening of one wound will cause the healing of another. He himself was growing less hasty in temper than

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of old, less inclined to rash judgments and suspicion. And as husband and wife drew nearer to each other with their increasing years, as the sorrow and shame that had been almost forgotten, the same thought was often in the minds of both—the hope that time, which had sweetened life for them, might soften also the heart of the child who had forsaken them.

Chapter LV

“A fourth Sara that does not appear”

NOTWITHSTANDING his sympathy with the sorrow of his old friends, the Colonel could not but feel inspirited and invigorated by the restitution of his good name and the admitted ownership of the work of his brain and hands. The consequence to him of the recent events at Bleachgreens was his speedy return to health, and to the cheerful occupation supplied by his inventive powers. And feeling assured that his presence must be for a long time to come associated with painful thoughts to the Montgomeries, he prepared to move with Sara and Arno to London, intending to proceed thence to the Casentino, where the *padre* was joyfully awaiting them.

Arno's picture of “Abraham and the Angels” attracted extraordinary attention on the wall of the Royal Academy in the Exhibition of that year, and the young painter was hailed as one of the few to whom the world might look for the re-establishment of a school of genuine art on the highest lines, in the not too distant future.

Mrs. Fontaine and Sir Jonah both came over to London to see it, and the two old friends who had rolled their hoops together in the Linen Hall Gardens, stood before it in the crowded gallery, and quarrelled as usual.

“So money is not everything, you see,” said the old lady, who had treated herself to a pair of new spectacles that no detail of Arno's conscientious work should miss her. “Here is something which your money never could produce.”

"Yet it is merchandise all the same," said Sir Jonah. "It means bread and butter to this headlong young pair, who will marry on the strength of it."

"Thank Heaven it does!" said Mrs. Fontaine. "Would you have them starve while the world is enriched by genius?"

"There was never any fear of their starving," growled Sir Jonah. "Their elders would take care of that."

"I have not seen them taking care," snapped the old lady. "The poor Colonel was incapacitated, as we have seen. I could do nothing immediate, unless I took my own life or retired to the poorhouse, and neither would have been allowed. The person who had something in his power kept fast hold of his money bags."

"Humph!" said Sir Jonah, "a little difficulty at first appears to be useful to them. Their future will be, perhaps, only too prosperous."

"If so, no thanks to you," said Mrs. Fontaine.

"I don't want thanks," growled the old man. "As dead men get no gratitude I shall not be troubled with it."

"They don't require your help now, thanks to the avenging spirit that struck poor Harvey."

"Well, my friend, you see Providence has been looking after them better than you or I could have done."

Mrs. Fontaine shook her head disapprovingly, but turned away with an impression which had long been on her mind, strengthened, to wit, that Sir Jonah intended to leave his fortune to Sara, but that as long as he lived he would never bring himself to part with a penny of it.

Mrs. Fontaine had something to say to Arno, also, about his successful picture.

"Oh, yes," she said, "I see that Sara has supplied you with a trio of angels, all very like her, each of them suggesting a distinct and separate trait in her character. But I would remind you that there is a fourth Sara who does not appear, but who, fortunately for you, exists, and will not in the long future always live so visibly in the poetry of your dream. She

is a prudent, level-headed, ready-witted Sara, who will be the good housewife, the sensible home-making companion whom a man absorbed in his ideals needs for his welfare quite as much as a goddess for his model or an angel for his inspiration."

Arno smiled. "Do you think I do not know Sara at all points?" he said.

"I am not sure that you do, sir ; not at all certain that any young man knows all that his wife will need to be in order to satisfy him. He imagines that his frugal home will be recreated for him somehow, every day, in all the order and adornment in which two happy creatures have established it, that his food will cook itself to suit his taste and digestion without supervision from any one, that his small purse will forbear to run low, even though nobody is careful of its contents. He thinks that his young wife ought to be able to keep herself wrapped in the veils of poetry, an object for his artistic adoration at any moment his eyes may turn on her."

Arno laughed outright.

"It is evident you have never seen Sara making pancakes in the little house in the Casentino," he said, "with an artist standing by. I have a portfolio of special sketches which I must show you."

Mrs. Fontaine put on her new spectacles and stared at him.

"Has all my rhetoric been wasted then?" she said, breaking into smiles.

"Every word of it. I do not deny that your perspicacity is as fine as can be, but it does not go far enough. Mightn't it occur to you that there are four or five Arnos as well as four or five Saras, and that one of them is a homely, common-sensible man, though the others may not be angels?"

"I never thought of that," said Mrs. Fontaine. "I believed that an artist, or at least a great one, lived with his head in the clouds, and required impossibilities. But I feel that nobody's education is ever finished. I should like to see those pancake sketches."

Kitty Canavan also had her say about the picture.

"They're all as like Miss Sara as peas in a pod ; but I don't know that it's altogether respectful to the angels to be makin' three o' them out of one mortal crature ! An' sure, Sara wasn't born when Abry-um seen them."

"True for you, Kitty. It's thousands of years ago."

"Then you might have painted her picture without puttin' a body's religion upside down," said Mrs. Canavan reproachfully.

"But you see, Kitty, it was Miss Sara who was copied off from the pattern of the angels. That was how the likeness came about."

"I don't see my way through it," persisted Kitty. "I think the Almighty has a pattern of His own, special and particular, for every one He makes ; not like mugs and cups in a china shop, that you wouldn't know the differ, and always when one is broke another the same to put your tea into."

"Well, Kitty, I'll agree with you, if you forgive me this time, and promise to make my apologies to the angels. Nobody could do that same better than you. And I am sure, moreover, that there is not another Kitty in heaven or earth that could be mistaken for yourself."

"Please God, no," said Kitty reverently, and went home to her knitting, thankful that she had been permitted to administer a wholesome lesson to youth, which, however kind and clever, is so often ignorant and thoughtless.

Nevertheless, Kitty was not at all satisfied with the movements that were on foot in the family. It was very delightful, of course, that a happy marriage was imminent, but why couldn't the young pair be content to settle down once for all in the Glen of the Waterfall, and allow Kitty Canavan to finish her days there in peace ? Her time was running short, and nobody's time was too long, for that matter, and there was a little green spot waiting for her among the old oak trees in a fold of the glen. There she buried her husband and her father and mother, and the only child she ever had, and how could she

disappoint them, leaving her bones among foreigners, and to be risin' up on the Last Day, far from home, and not knowin' what was become of anyone, and nobody round her understandin' a word she would say. And in the meantime she didn't hold with livin' your life out two seas away from the only spot where a body could feel at home and think of their soul, gettin' ready for the call. Italy was a beautiful place to live in, if you were never to die, with the sky blue and the sun shinin', and fruit growin' on the roadside for anybody to eat, and chestnuts, equal to our own potatoes, hangin' out o' the trees, and their harvest gathered into their aprons without ever a spade in ground. But give her, Kitty, the fire out of the bog, when the sun was resting himself, and the food turned out of the earth, as was natural, and the door shut again' the wind and the rain, and the stories and songs round the fireside in the winter. Sure winter was over, out foreign, before you could clap your hands, and there's little time for a soul to bethink of itself and where it's going, with the sun always in your eyes, and the flowers round you!

"And I don't deny that Mister Arno's a fine young gentleman, great and clever, with the eye of him lookin' through and through you. But what any one wants with pictures I never could make out. Sure, haven't they the Almighty's own first-hand works to be lookin' at, and them so beautiful that paints of no colours could aigual them. Now, don't be angry with me, Miss Sara, for I'm only an ignorant old woman, and God enough for me, and there must be somethin' in it all, seein' the way the world is goin' mad about pictures, and your own Misther Arno a hero in the middle of it. But one thing I will ask you. Does paintin' pictures give wages to poor families, like the mills we were used to, grindin' the bread of the childher from year's end to year's end for us?"

"It gives ideas to the world, Kitty."

"Oh, then, what are ideas to you when you're hungry?" said Kitty.

She had a profound scorn for people who wanted anything

more than bread to eat and God above them. But then, Kitty was of an old race that is dying out.

When Mark Montgomery arrived to see the great picture of Abraham receiving the angels, he declared some sympathy with the tenets of Mrs. Canavan's philosophy.

"Bravo, Kitty!" he said, "you have grasped the first principle of life. Abraham, himself, did not demand much more than you are asking for. If people were to live the poetry that God puts into their hearts, they wouldn't be in need of pictures to give them ideas."

"And the angels would come to them," cried Sara. "As it is, Arno, in his work, takes the place of an angel."

"And Sara of three of them," said Mark smiling.

"Stay," said Arno, "both of you! I am but doing as Mark recommends, trying to live up to the poetry that God has put in my heart."

"And I," said Sara, "am trying to live up to Arno on just the same lines."

"And what about me and Kitty?" asked Mark. "We knit our stockings and spin our yarns, and keep the blood warm in the veins which feed the brain-mills of which you and your brother and sisters of Art turn the mystic wheels. For my part, I am content to run my course with the water-power that foots, so slow and so silent, along by the cottages of our mill-hands, where the children are sure of their daily bread and their lapful of spring primroses."

"All honour to you, old fellow!" said Arno. "You and Kitty would make me feel ashamed if it were not that the call of my own vocation is so long and so loud in my heart."

Chapter LVI

“Some Women do”

So after the London season was over, and the Royal Academy Exhibition closed, there was a joyful journey to the Casentino, despite Kitty's lamentations, which were silenced only by a promise that, dead or alive, she should be returned one day to the Glen of the Waterfall.

To the great joy of the *padre* it was arranged that Sara and the Colonel should set up housekeeping with him once more in the little brown house which had so many happy associations for the young people, while Arno worked in his studio in Florence, and progress was being made in the building up of a future home. The house designed by the artist for his wife was to be beautiful, with vine-covered veranda and pergola, and comfortable in all its chambers with the comfortableness that is especially English. The low wide windows that ran almost all the way round the walls of the sitting rooms admitted the lovely landscape. “True for you, Kitty!” said Arno. “Never did Master of Art produce such pictures!” There was a spare bedroom for Mark Montgomery, or Frank Hurst, or any other friend who might be willing to lead for a while the simple life that Sara and Arno had planned for themselves. The Colonel's workshop was a particular feature, and a modest vineyard and a spacious garden teeming with flowers and fruits, surrounded the ideal dwelling.

Sara and Kitty were busy with their needles preparing the house-linen that was to be stored in the old carved chests and

drawers which they bought from the farmhouses among the hills. Delicate gossamer curtains were made to temper sunshine when the dark green jalousies were open to the golden light. Every week-end brought Arno to the Casentino to see how things were going, and to persuade the Colonel to allow of a still earlier day for the wedding than had already been arranged. Arno's fame as a young painter of amazing promise had not yet brought him much of this world's wealth, and returns from the profit of the improved invention had to be waited for. Nevertheless, a day was fixed upon, not too late in a splendid autumn, on which the *padre* was to make Arno and Sara man and wife, and an ideal life was to begin.

Mrs. Fontaine, Mark, and Sir Jonah were bidden to the wedding, and had promised to come. Meanwhile a startling event occurred which temporarily saddened happy hearts.

Mrs. Fontaine wrote :

“You have heard of the death of poor Sir Jonah. It is one of those strange examples that give one pause. He died as lonely as he lived. He was, I thought, beginning to come out of his shell a little, and I hoped for a more decided improvement, but habit is strong in us all, I suppose, and perhaps he was too old to change. He was stricken suddenly, after which he was not able to speak, though he tried to do so. I hastened to him as soon as I heard of the illness, and as I endeavoured to give a little comfort I heard, I am sure I heard, him murmur ‘Sara!’ I guessed that he wanted to make a will in her favour. I always felt sure that he wished to leave his fortune to her. But he was not able to say another word ; he died without further sign, and all his possessions will of course have to go to the Crown. One does not like to blame the dead. I was always quarrelling with poor Sir Jonah, and perhaps I only did harm, but it is one of the most lamentable instances of suspicious prudence and foolish over-caution, leading to fatal procrastination, that I have ever heard of!”

“We are just as well without it,” said Sara. “If we had inherited a great fortune people would never be satisfied to let

us live the life we want to live, in our ideal home, or here and there in the by-ways we intend to explore. We should have been called on to spend part of our time at Willows' Burn, and heaven knows where besides, and the responsibilities of our stewardship would have been a heavy burthen that would have crippled our liberty. But I am grieved for poor old Sir Jonah. He had always a kind word for me, however crusty he may have been to others."

"I am sorry he could not have the pleasure of doing some kind of good with his money," said the Colonel. "Though you did not wish for the fortune, charity would have found uses for it. Alms-houses for the aged poor, hospitals for the sick! It is melancholy to think of it."

With a few genuine sighs for the lonely old man who had made so much and so little of life, his personality soon became a memory of the past to his friends. Mrs. Fontaine had shed her few honest tears over the failures of her old friend before she arrived at the Casentino for the wedding. The *padre* married the young pair, whom he called his children, in his own little simple chapel, and rejoiced in his heart of St. Francis, that no bitter shadows, either of poverty or of riches, were likely ever to gather round them. Arno's genius was of the order sure to win fame, but certain never to make much money. He would not paint flattering portraits of the vulgar rich to get diamonds for his wife, nor multiply merely decorative beauties of colour and form to build himself a palace of common-place luxury. The work he hopes to do will be of high spiritual meaning, and will touch the deepest feelings of human nature. At the point where so many fine artists have failed away in this respect, tempted by the social rewards of success, Arno will hold on the way he has marked out for himself. And in this his wife will be a true help-meet, having no passion for diamonds, or for magnificence in social intercourse.

The first journey made by Sara and Arno after their marriage was a pilgrimage round the birth-places of the great

Italian painters and the scenes of their labours. True to his first ideal master, Arno visited the Castle of Vinci in the Lower Valdarno, from which Leonardo took his name, and here they lingered, recalling the charming legends of this wonderful genius, while Sara sang his music, and Arno repeated lines of his poetry. Sitting on the shore of the blue lake Fucecchio, with a lute like Leonardo's own, Sara sang in a clear, sweet recitative, the sonnet of the glorious da Vinci preserved by Lomazzo :

“If what thou would'st thou can'st not, then content thee
To will as thou may'st act. It is but folly
To will what cannot be. Soon learns the wise
To wrest his will from bootless wishes free.

Our bliss and woe depend alike on knowledge
Of what we should do, and, that known, to do it.
But he alone shall compass this who never
Doth warp his will when right before him stands.

All he can do, man cannot safely will.
Oft seemeth sweet what soon to bitter turns.
How have I wept of some fond wish possessed !

Thou, therefore, reader of these lines, would'st thou
Count with the good, and to the good be dear ?
Will only to be potent for the right.”

“Thus Mark at his mill,” cried Arno, “you Sara, my wife, music maker, art-inspirer, comfort-giver, and I, who have dared to use the pencil hallowed by Leonardo, Mark, ennobling trade and using it for fine issues, you upholding the hearts that trust in you, I hoping to be a humble interpreter of God's message to the world through Art. None of us can do the other's work. Each for his own. ‘Up to God all three!’ in the words of Andrea. Poor glorious Andrea, Browning's Andrea, with the heart of him sick, and the power of his hand stayed by the worthlessness of the woman to whom he had looked for happiness :

‘Had you, . . . but brought a mind !
Some women do so.’

"I am glad I have got Sara for my wife and not Lucrezia. I shall not have to 'finish the portrait out of hand,' and 'throw in a thing or two' to

'Get you the thirteen scudi for the ruff.'"

"I can make my own ruffs," said Sara laughing. "I wonder why very beautiful women are so often good for nothing."

"Often, but not always," said Arno, "or Sara would not be Sara."

"O my Faultless Painter, don't waste all your sweets of flattery on your wife in our first days, or how will she live on plain wholesome fare when you have nothing else left for her? Keep something nice to say to me when my wrinkles are coming and my hair is turning grey. Will you put me into your pictures then, I wonder."

"I can see beforehand all the changes that will come to you. Each change will be a development of some new kind of beauty which I shall want to record."

"Rembrandt certainly made fine pictures of ugly old women," said Sara irreverently. "I don't think Andrea did."

"Lucrezia was never beautiful as an old woman. She was a flower that would wither for want of healthy root. After all these centuries I bear her a spite for her usage of the man.

'Why do I need you?

What wife had Rafael, or has Agnolo?

In this world, who can do a thing, will not;

And who would do it, cannot, I perceive:

Yet the will's somewhat—somewhat, too, the power—

And thus we half-men struggle. At the end,

God, I conclude, compensates, punishes.'

Then he glances back at all he lost for her; Francis:

'And that long festal year at Fontainebleau!'

When he, Andrea,

'Put on the glory, Rafael's daily wear,'

And then says he,

‘You called me, and I came home to your heart.

What is lost?

Let my hands frame your face in your hair’s gold.’

No heart, no home, only golden hair and the tired spirit in a disappointed man.”

“I’m glad my hair is not golden,” said Sara. “If it were I should begin to fear that with all your fine flatteries you were intending silyly to suggest a parallel, a colour of likeness between artists’ wives. And, after all, you are not bound to be an exact reproduction of Andrea—if I am not modelled on the beauty of Lucrezia!”

It was Arno who laughed now.

“I ask pardon of that great spirit,” he said. “And whether or not I ever live to make a niche for myself in the temple of fame, you and I are going to be happy, Sara!”

